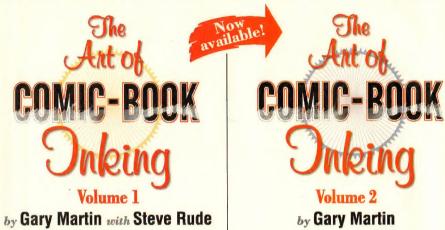


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a note...

FREE

This isn't what you want to hear when you're trying to land your first work in the comic book industry.

You've heard the story of big money, easy hours, and the fun of creating the comics that you read as a kid. Now you've finished school, and you really want to work in the industry. You run into a guy who has a 563 page graphic novel that he created, wrote, and penciled - but he needs an inker, colorist, letterer, etc. Do you want to spend the next six months working on something that may never see print?

Getting into the comic book industry is by no means a walk in the park. For as many creators that I know are now working in the market, there are about ten people I know that want to be

What I tell them, and what I'm passing along to you is this:

Get out of the basement.

Get that drawing table cleared off.

Even if it's FREE work for a friend or someone that you meet at a convention. Just do it.

Sure, there are a few things to keep in mind: Is the work I'm doing going to better myself? Is it something that I can show around to editors and publishers? Will the creator/publisher promote it on the internet or at conventions?

We all have our first work... and second, and third.

But if you continue to work (write, pencil, ink, etc.) you will continue to get better, you'll have new samples to show to a publisher/editor, and you'll develop good habits that can lead to a great job.

If you're lucky enough to be working with a professional in the market and they want you to work on something gratis, do it, if only so that they can pass your name along to editors and publishers they work with.

Many times for me, FREE work has opened doors to a great moneymaking project, or I've been lucky enough to make some new friends, among other things,

FREE isn't bad...just be careful and make sure that it betters you, your career, and hopefully...both.

This issue features Star Wars illustrator Jan Duursema, Jan went above and beyond the call of duty by personally helping us get her interview and all its accompanying artwork speedily approved by the great folks at Lucas Films. I want to thank Jan and all her pals at Lucas Films for taking time out of their extremely busy days to make sure we could get this issue of Sketch out smoothly and according to schedule. We appreciate their courtesy and hard work, speaking volumes for the professionalism of all concerned. Jan is one of the top illustrators working in the field of comics today. I've enjoyed her artwork on her varied projects over the years, and if you're as big a Star Wars fan as I am, you'll certainly appreciate the talent and work she brings to the universe far, far away,



bobh@bluelinepro.com



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Jan Duursema

Drawing Star Wars and other childhood dreams come true

by Bill Baker

To say that Jan Duursema is living the good life right now might be an understatement. It seems that she's found her "special place" in life ... and not just in the typical sense of locating that center of inner peace and contentment that's so often invoked by any number of new age gurus. Rather, Duursema has found her ideal job after literally spending years searching and striving in the comics arena. And best of all, she's telling stories of a time long, long ago in a galaxy far away that feature some of the most beloved characters and concepts in the history of modern entertainment.

If that seems like hyperbole, just consider that this personable and popular artist was not only tapped to illustrate the Dark Horse Comics adaptation of the recently released Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones film, but that she's also a regular illustrator of a wide variety of epic new adventures in that universe. Add in the simple fact that one of the characters she designed for that comic series has now completed the circle, so to speak, by appearing in the final cut of Episode II, and you'll have an idea of the kind of charmed life that Ian is currently leading. In point of fact, Ian will happily admit to living out her life-long dream.

However, things were not necessarily always rosy for Duursema. While it's true that she cut her teeth on Sgt. Rock while still studying at the Joe Kubert School and enjoyed successful runs on any number of DC and Marvel titles, Duursema one day found herself struggling to find not only her next gig, but also striving to discover her own particular artistic voice. All in all, her story is one that has some very important lessons for anyone that's willing to learn from someone who worked their way from apprentice to master status, and has finally come into her own as one of the masters of Jedi art.



"This page was painted over my pencils by Dave Mccaig. One of my favorites." Jan Duursema

Sketch: Were you always interested in art, or was it something that seemed to creep up on you?

Jan Duursema: I was always interested in art. I can remember being really little, and lying under my mom's coffee table, drawing pictures on the under side of the table...which she let us do. She didn't mind, because nobody was going to see them. I was always interested in drawing. The minute I could pick up a pencil and a crayon, I was drawing. There was never any doubt in my mind that I wanted to be an artist. The only question was how I was going to make a living at it.

Sketch: That's really funny, because Frank Cho told almost exactly the same story.

Jan: Really? [General laughter.]

Sketch: Yeah, yeah. Almost like he was pretending he was Michelangelo, working on the Sistine chapel ceiling. [More general laughter.]

Jan: I don't think I knew who Michelangelo was, but I liked drawing upside down, because it was fun.

Jan: Yeah, it did. It just interests me. I think the fun of it is imagining yourself farther away from where you are to someplace where all

Sketch: What about the act of drawing, and the whole idea of creating art in general, was attractive to you back then?

Jan: The same thing that's still attractive to me. It's still fun!

Drawings tell stories, and that's something I've always been interested in. I'd seen single illustrations that told stories in picture

books that we had around the house. My favorite was one about Pompeii. I was always interested in how the story was told through the illustration, without even knowing it at the time.

And we always had comic books around. Every week while my mom went grocery shopping, my dad would buy my sister and I each two comics. It was cheap entertainment, and it kept us quiet while sitting waiting in the back of the car.

Sketch: What were some of the comics you were reading back then?

Jan: Everything from Superman and Batman to Archie and Richie Rich. Oddly enough, they didn't carry Marvel comics where we bought our comics, so I didn't have any exposure to Marvel comics until later on. I read the strips in the paper too; Prince Valiant, Dondl. Brenda Starr.

Sketch: Did you have any particular favorites?

Jan: Mostly I liked the heroic adventures of Superman, Tarzan, Wonder Woman, Lois Lane and the Legion of Super-Heros. If there was nothing else left, I would buy the humorous books. I liked the more realistic approach and the more adventure-oriented books. I wanted something with adventures, and evil villains, and people flying around and having fun.

Sketch: Did you also read other things?

Jan: As far as books and things like that?

Sketch: Yeah. You mentioned that you read a lot of things earlier. Were you into some of the more traditional adventure novels and such, like The Three Musketeers?

Jan: Later on, yeah. I was thinking about this earlier today and I remembered that the first science fiction book I read, and I think the book that was the most influential about the direction I took, was Space Cat by Andre Norton. I picked it out of the library because it was about cats and outer space. I was into cats and was fascinated by space. What I found was a science fiction adventure with a cat in it. And after that, I just couldn't get enough science fiction and fantasy. So that's kind of the direction one book about a cat took me. And it's an odd way to go there, I suppose, [Laughter.]

Sketch: Oh, not at all! I was just sitting here with a big smile on my face because I was recalling all the Andre Norton books I had read back at that age, like Galactic Derelict and Daybreak-2250 A.D., and just how much I enjoyed reading those books as a kid. And some of the Issac Asimov ones, too

Jan: Well, from there I got into Isaac Asimov, Heinlein, Lloyd Alexander, Pohl Anderson, Ray Bradbury, Harlan Ellison, Edgar Allen Poe, Michael Moorcock, and Edgar Rice Burroughs, to name a few, I read everything I could find.

Sketch: What about the science fiction stuff appealed to you? Was it the same kind of thing as with the super-hero adventures that interested you?

Jan: Maybe it was just the times. Star Trek and Lost in Space were on TV. They were very new, and very exciting. I'd always liked the TV shows that had more of a science fiction-type theme to them, like the old Supercar show. And then anime, like Astro Boy, Speed Racer, and Gigantor. Rodan and Mighty Joe Young were the first movies I remember seeing. Valley of Gwangi was also a favorite because it combined cowboys and dinosaurs!

Sketch: So it all just kind of fed you imagination, then.

Jan: Yeah, it did, It just interests me. I think the fun of it is imagining yourself farther away from where you are to someplace where all things are possible. For a kid sitting around a small, quiet town and going to school, there's not a lot of adventure to be had, except in your mind. [General laughter] So I let the books and comies take me to the worlds they were set in.

Sketch: How about the cover illustrations on the science fiction and fantasy books back then? Did they have any effect on you? Jan: A tremendous effect. The cover art is what attracted me to a lot of books. I saw a lot of Frank Frazetta paintings. Boris Vallejo, Jeffery Jones, and many others whose names I don't know.

Sketch: Also, a lot of those covers weren't necessarily credited back then.

Jan: Well, that's the thing I was just going to say, I don't remember seeing names on them. If they were credited, the credits were inside and not on the covers. Even the comic books. So I didn't even know the artists, and who had done what, as the work wasn't credited until much later on. When I got into the Kubert School I didn't know who was who, I just read the books. The only person's name I did remember was Joe Kubert, because he always signed his work somewhere. [General laughter] Isn't that funny?

Sketch: Yeah. And it shows just how effective that practice was, too. Especially when you start identifying that name with a particular style in the future. Was that part of your process of learning that people actually drew and earned their livings from creating comics, or did that realization come from something else?

Jan: You know, I didn't really think about comic books as a job or as a career. My goal was to do book cover illustration. So I went to four years of majoring in Fine Arts. It was a local college and affordable, but I should have been going to school in New York, but my parents didn't want me doing that. "She's a girl, and can't go to New York," that sort of thing. So I didn't. I did get one job doing a cover illustration for a book from DAW books; something called The Stolen Goddess. It was something that had to be done in like a week. [General laughter] I know! It didn't turn out that well, and they never asked me to do another one. [More general laughter.]

Sketch: Hey, what do you expect in a week, right?

Jan: Yeah, right. But I tried my best, and that was all I could do at the time.

Sketch: What was the name of that college you attended? Jan: Ramapo College in Mahwah, New Jersey.

Sketch: What was the program like there?

Jan: It was truly a Fine Art program. It was painting for the sake of the abstraction of painting...which is fine, but did nothing toward the style I wanted to learn. I wanted to do the type of illustration I was seeing on book covers. Even though it was disappointing to me in a way I decided to take what they had to offer, and explained to the teachers what I wanted to do. I tried to work within the class program, incorporating some illustrative-type paintings as well as the abstract work to keep them happy. But I was always thinking about sci-If and storytelling covers.

Sketch: Did that abstract work help you at all in your other work? Jan: No.

Sketch: So it was essentially useless?

Jan: I don't think that anything we try is useless. Some things we might not utilize all the time, but it showed me another way of seeing things and helped me understand the process of abstraction better. I think I have a better appreciation of non-representational art because of it. I just tend to like to draw realistically. If I wanted to, I could probably venture back into abstraction and experiment some more. Especially now that I understand how to draw (hopefully) a lot better than I did back then, but at the time it seemed like a lot of garbage to me. [General laughter] Because I was pretty single minded. I knew what I wanted to do

Sketch: When did you come to that realization? It must have been in high school, or even earlier.

Jan: Fairly early. I used to make paper dolls for my sister and

myself. Toy companies didn't make a lot of the little action figures back then so, essentially, they-were our action figures. We had some great adventures!

I was writing science fiction stories in fourth and fifth grade, because I had these weird dreams. I would make drawings in sketchbooks to go along with the stories. It wasn't until eighth grade that I was fortunate enough to have a teacher who really encouraged me to write and draw. She saw a spark there and gave me lots of assignments to use my talents.

About the same time I was also collaborating on a book with a friend of mine. We both drew and used to trade drawings back a forth, illustrating different scenes from it. It was never published or even publishable, but the journey was a lot of fun.

Not that anybody was publishing a lot of that kind of thing then. It seemed like an illustrated book was an old fashioned venue. Publishers weren't publishing books with single illustrations. All the books I read didn't have illustrations, and if they occasionally did, you might see one at the beginning. But it was just something I liked to do, so I did it.

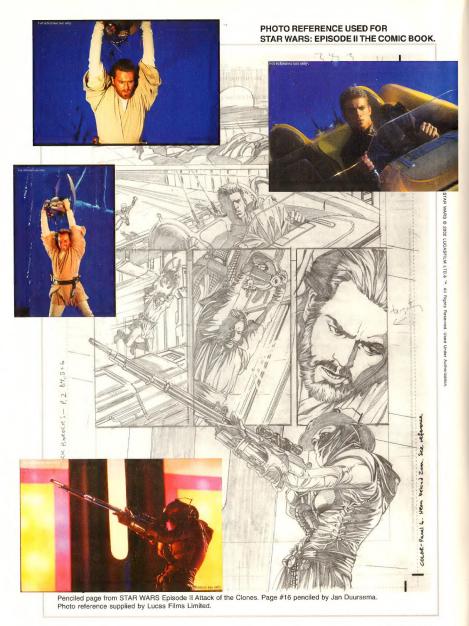
Sketch: Did you have much training before college, or were you basically self-taught?

Jan: I took a lot of art classes in high school and they were great. But they tended to cover a wide range of things, but never sequential storytelling. So I guess, until I attended the Kubert School, I basically was self-taught. I took a painting class a couple of times, but nothing that would really have taken me towards drawing comic books.

STAR WARS cover used only for solicitation to stores. Created by Jan Duursema.



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Sketch: How did you get from wanting to be a book cover illustrator to going to the Kubert School?

Jan: That's kind of a funny, "just meant to be" type-story. I was down at a science fiction and comic book store in one of the malls in Paramus, NJ one day, talking to the owner about how I wanted to be an illustrator and painter. He said, "Oh, bring your paintings in sometime!" So a couple days later I went back, and took my portfolio with me. I had a painting that I had done for somebody of their son as Luke Skywalker, with Darth Vader looming in the background, and he [storeowner] thought it was pretty cool. He asked me if I had ever heard of the Joe Kubert School out in Dover, New Jersey? And I said, "No. What kind of school is that?" And he said, "Well, it's for drawing comic books," I said, "Yeah?" And he said, "And for illustration, as far as I know." I said, "OK. I gotta look into this!"

I told my parents I wanted to apply to a cartooning school. They were a little doubtful. They wondered how I could make a living drawing comic books. But they had always supported my being an artist, and within a couple of days I went there for an interview. It was already August, and classes began in September. Joe Kubert looked at my portfolio and accepted me into the school. I guess the rest is history. [General laughter] There just seemed to be an attraction to doing this kind of work. When I looked around the school and saw the pages of art hanging on the walls I suddenly realized, "Oh my gosh, people are doing this for a living!" Before that, I don't think it occurred to me. Here were all these creative people; they were creating and drawing this wonderful storytelling art. This is what I wanted to do! It was like coming home. From that moment on I never had a doubt about what I wanted to do.

Sketch: Did you have any difficulty going from the single, static image of the book cover to the series of sequential images required for comics, or did that just come naturally and relatively easily for vou?

Jan: The funny thing is that I always found the more static, covertype illustration more difficult. Comic illustration, because it's a flowing kind of storytelling, is easier to do because I don't have to settle on having one picture tell everything. I can tell my story in a lot of sequential pictures. I like to turn the pictures around in my mind and move the camera in and out. That doesn't mean that there aren't some days when the pages just defy getting done because I can't settle on that piece of storytelling that's going to make the page work, that's really going to make it rock, you know?

Sketch: Well, aside from making you realize that there was a way to make a living in comics, what else did the Kubert School do for vou?

Jan: In what respect?

Sketch: Well, I'd imagine that you got some professional contacts from your time there, and that there might have been some lessons or tips that proved important or helpful when doing the work? I've known a number of people who have attended the school in the past, and they learned some stuff about art, but really it was the business contacts, and being exposed to the whole professional side of the business, which is something that's not taught at most colleges when it comes to art...

Jan: Yeah, that's very true, and that's something I haven't thought about in a while. One thing that was really great for both my husband, Tom Mandrake, and myself and some of the other guys who were going to the school in the first couple of years, was that Joe was editing Sgt. Rock at the time, and he let some of the students write and draw back-up stories in the book. You might write a two or three page story up or do one of what were called "Battle Albums," a one or two page story with illustrations about a methods of working. battle or event in a war. Joe would take the time to sit with us and just give us instruction on our approach to the stories, how to improve our stories and how to improve our drawing artwork. then? This was all after school, in what would have now been the third Jan: Yeah



Cover Sketch for STAR WARS #45 by Jan Duursema.

year. Joe helped us out tremendously that way, putting a piece of tracing paper over our drawing and redrawing it. And you're just sitting there going, "Oh my god! Why can't I do that?" [General laughter] It was frustrating, but at the same time so tremendously instructive. To this day, when I am working I am applying storytelling that I learned from Joe.

We had also met teachers at the school like Dick Giordano, who could teach you more in two minutes about inking than you could learn by yourself in a year, who later gave us work at DC Comics. It was nice to be able to go in and say, "Hi, remember me?" And they'd say, "Sure, come on in and show us your portfolio," And if they knew you went to the Kubert School I always imagined Joe warning them; "They're coming." [General laughter] But your work really has to speak for itself. The contacts are great to have, but if your work isn't up to par and what the editors are looking for, you're not going to get work.

Sketch: So the whole experience was a total immersion kind of thing, and constantly drawing all the time.

Jan: Yeah. But the desire has really got to be there. For me, since drawing is all I ever really wanted to do. I tended to do it anyway. Everybody at the school was always drawing. It was like a twentyfour hour a day comic book convention. [Laughter] You all drew together, and you drew off of each other too. There was a lot of sharing of ideas. For a lot of us, it was the first time we'd spent time with other people with like interests. A lot of times you would see what somebody else was doing and say, "Gee, that's neat! How do you do that?" And we could all incorporate little things from the other person's work into ours, and try to understand different

Sketch: Were you first published in the back pages of Sgt. Rock,



Sketch: Were you penciling and inking that stuff?

Jan: Yes. Sometimes penciling and inking and writing. Sometimes we'd have a short story that we were asked to illustrate. A lot of times it depended on what we thought we were up to doing.

Sketch: What kind of stories were you doing? Obviously these were war tales, but do you remember any specifics about the tales? Jan: Yeah, I remember one called the "Wolves of War" that was a Civil War story. It was the first story I drew that had snow in it. Joe taught me how to depict snow in that one, playing off the shadows of the art. It was also my first lesson in the value of the silhouette and how to play light off of shadow. I had some limited success in applying that concept to this story, but I wasn't ready to fully understand that lesson until much later on.

My other favorite story was one I wrote and drew. I read a story about a WW I pilot who had been lead back across enemy lines by his blind cat (there's that cat theme again...). I thought that would be a great story to illustrate. In my story, the pilot will only fly his plane with a blind cat named Faith. She's his good luck, his charm, and the story was called 'Blind Faith' of course ... so, the pilot crashes his plane behind enemy lines and is blinded by fire. His cat leads him back across enemy lines to home. I really enjoyed drawing it...it was kind of a cute story, and fun to do. When I turned it in, Joe took one look at the cat and said, "That is the ugliest cat I've ever seen!" [General laughter] I look back on it now and say, "Oh my gosh, he was right! That's one ugly cat."

Sketch: Hey, she'd just gotten out of a crashed plane. Jan: She was ugly before she got in the crashed plane! [Loud go back later with my script notes and I'll start sketching a few

general laughter] It was bad. But I had modeled it after one of my cats, and she was kind of homely, anyway, so ... oh well.

Sketch: Well that's what you get when you draw from life, sometimes. [General laughter.]

Jan: I guess, yeah. My first venture into photographic reference.

Sketch: How did you write those stories? Did you work from a plot, or did you do it full script?

Jan: We'd present the idea to Joe as a plot, and then we did full script from that. So it was really instructive in how to approach the writing end of it, too. Not that I've done a lot of writing since then,

Sketch: Right, because I wasn't aware of that fact - that you'd done some writing.

Ian: In fact, I had a story published recently in Star Wars Tales #11 that I am really happy with. It was called 'Ghost' and was about a ledi from the Episode I era surviving Vader's Jedi purge long enough to meet a young Han Solo. It was great fun to draw as well, though I didn't have a writer to blame when there were too many panels on a page. The other fun thing about it was that it was fully painted over my pencils by Dave McCaig. Very different for both

Sketch: Well, is that something that you might pursue again in the

Jan: Absolutely. Generally, I really enjoy a collaborative kind of effort with a writer. I am currently working with John Ostrander on the Star Wars ongoing book. We get together and talk about ideas and just really get each other going on some idea. And then he'll write it down, and let me add my ideas. To me, there's more of an organic kind of feel to doing a story that way - a give and

Sketch: Right. There's a real synergy that develops. Jan: Absolutely, yeah. We play off of each other's good points. And bad points, sometimes. [General laughter] Really, you can get a lot of energy going that way. It's great.

Sketch: Is that your favorite way to work?

Jan: Yeah. I mean, I don't mind working off of a straight script. That's fine too. But my favorite way is to have input into the plot

Sketch: Do you have any preference between a full script and what's called the 'Marvel style,' or plot outline?

Jan: I prefer Marvel style plot. It's not a bad thing to have a little bit of the dialogue in there. Just enough to give you a general idea of what kind of space you might need for captions and balloons. I've never really worked on one of those 'bare bones' Marvel plots where you get the beginning, middle and end, and have to make it happen. That wouldn't work that well for me, because I like a little more instruction than that, even if I do change the way the panels go sometimes. I don't like to be hemmed in by too many balloons and captions. Sometimes in a full script the writer might put in too much and it will become repetitive, because the pictures and the captions are saying the same thing. The art and the writing should enhance one another, and I think that plot style gives both parts of the creative team opportunity to do this. It's that synergy thing again. Plot style allows for more energy.

Sketch: How do you create a typical comic book these days? Do you read the script all the way through first and then do some thumbnails, or do you do some quick thumbnails during that first

Jan: Usually I start reading it and if a picture flashes into my mind that seems like something I want to put into the story, I'll do a thumbnail right on the script so I don't lose the thought. Then I'll go back through certain sections one more time and get a few more ideas. I know if I don't put that drawing down right when I see it the first time I'm gonna lose it. I'm not gonna remember it later on, because there's just so many images that flash through because it's habitual and easy to think that way for me. Now I try your mind when you start to work on a story that some of the to think in mass and shadow. I feel like that was a turning point for things get lost. So I've learned to put down my first fresh me with my art. So that was very exciting. impressions

And then I usually go back and try to do more complete thumbnails of maybe five to ten pages of the story. It's always great when I can go through and do the whole thing, but I usually get impatient and want to start to draw before that happens, and capture some of the energy in the thumbnails before the energy dissipates.

Sketch: And all of this would be in a sketchbook, or even in the margins of the script right?

Jan: Yeah. And then a lot of times what I'll do is. I'll take the thumbnails I think work and enlarge them on a copier and trace on the panel or how complex the page is.

Sketch: How much do you change those initial layouts when you move them to the boards and work on finishing the drawing? Jan: Sometimes I don't change them much at all, other times the finished page looks nothing like the layout. I might find that in order to draw attention to a certain panel or action that I end up enlarging a figure, or to give a crowded page more space that I might want to let the background bleed under the rest of the panels. Many times I'll just put the layout I have done underneath vanish. That happens to me sometimes when I draw in my the paper and start tracing over it and drawing in the details.

Lately I'm doing a lot more pages of layouts first, because I find I can go faster if I work on multiple pages at once. If I try out a panel and it's not what I want, I can go back and do a couple different versions of it. When I get the one I want I can put it on the lightbox. Sometimes I turn it or tilt it or enlarge or shrink it to get what I want. It's not as constricting or frustrating as trying to draw and erase on the board, especially if I get a better idea in the middle of it. That way, I can bring all of the pieces together onto the final board.

Sketch: How important is the overall design of the page to you? Jan! The most important thing. I try to plan the overall page design in the thumbnails and then I try to get that initial design to work on the page. I think about which panels I want to be the largest and where I want to draw the reader's attention, because that's where most of the energy of the page is going to be coming from. Then, if I want some smaller panels, I want to make sure they enhance the larger panel. It sounds complicated, but a lot of this process becomes instinctive after a while. Then I try to figure out where to spot the blacks, so I can design that. I think in my work the solid black areas draw the eve to certain parts of the drawing. That's something I've only discovered in the last couple of years, and it has really changed the way my art looks. My pages used to have an overall 'gray' feeling. I didn't put a lot of black in my stuff in the past. I was afraid if I added too much black that I would take away from the line work I had done. But I always felt that something was missing...that what I ended up with wasn't what I was seeing in my mind. Essentially, I was seeing shadows, but it wasn't translating to the finished drawing. My approach actually started to change right before I began working on Star

After I saw The Phantom Menace I said to myself, "I've got to draw Star Wars!" So I came home and started drawing samples for Dark Horse. When it came time to approach the inking, I just sat there with the brush in my hand and I said, "I don't know what to do to ink this." I didn't want to use the same linear kind of approach I'd always gone with. I had put in some black, but it was composed of lines. Tom looked at what I was doing and said, "Well, stop drawing the lines, and start to draw the shadows." Something just clicked. I said, "Wait a minute! Okay." [General laughter] And I

thumbnails in a sketchbook. Then I'll read through it again, maybe tried that. I tried putting no line down, just putting down my shadows. From then on it just seemed like something that I had been missing was suddenly there. That's how I think now, I try not to think in line as much anymore, and it's a struggle sometimes

As I look back on it, I find that a lot of that change in style had to do with other things I was doing at the time. I was doing a lot of sculpture and a lot of functional-type of pottery on the wheel. But it was the sculpture. I think, that really helped me understand more of the mass and the form and the roundness of the objects. I think because I had always thought about two-dimensional drawing that objects had always seemed really flat to me. Now, suddenly, with the sculpture they started taking on dimension, which I was then able to translate back into the drawing. With the arts, one thing can play into another. I had done sculpture before, but never as intensely as I was doing it at this one period of time. I was sculpting a lot of over that. Sometimes I'll just draw directly on the board. It depends faces, heads and figures, and then it all just kind of came together.

> Sketch: And the whole idea of lending the characters and all the objects in the drawings real weight really feeds into the idea of finding and focusing the energy in the panels, because that would be fighting against it, and directing it, wouldn't it?

> Jan: Oh yeah, Especially when you're working in clay As with a drawing, if you don't capture that initial wave of energy, it goes away. It's only there for a very short period of time, and if you don't catch it or if you fiddle with it too much, it's just going to go

> > "From the Darth Maul miniseries (Inks Rick Magyar, color Dave McCaig). I liked the idea of Maul holding a small image of Sidious in the palm of his hand." Jan Duursema.



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lines moving all over the place, and then I go to translate it onto the actual page and suddenly realize it's just terrible and has no energy at all. "Why is it just sitting there?" [General laughter] And I realize it's because all the extraneous lines that are there aren't really extraneous; they've become part of the energy of the drawing. That's always a disappointment when that happens.

Sketch: Has the shift to using shadows rather than lines altered the way you draw?

Jan: Yeah, I think it has, I simplify a lot, Before I would try to put in every little detail, and every little line, and just be afraid to put the shadows in because they might ruin the lines. Now I think more about the shadows; it's really simplified things for me. Some of the extraneous 'hay' - those little lines that do nothing for the overall drawing - are gone now, and I really feel good about that.

Sketch: Do the new coloring techniques help feed into this new approach?

Jan: I was just going to mention that. Yeah, that's the other thing. If it's not handled right, the new kind of coloring will kill linework. I've noticed with my 'darker' approach that the coloring and the art really work well together. Of course, I've had some really great colorists on the Star Wars books -Dave McCaig, who's just absolutely incredible, and Brad Anderson, who is also wonderful. Dave and I have worked together for so long that it's like he can read my mind.

Sketch: That's a great feeling, I bet.

Cover for STAR WARS ongoing #43. Pencils by Jan.



sketchbook. I'll get this great energy going and there are all these Jan: Oh, it is. It's wonderful. Wonderful and very, very rare. You very rarely get to work with a team where everybody is hitting the same notes. A lot of times you can be working with someone who does not complement your style at all. And sometimes it's interesting. because their vision is different than yours. But a lot of time it's not, because their vision is just too different a kind of vision than

> Sketch: And it ends up clashing with what you're trying to do. Ian: Yeah, a lot of times it does.

Sketch: All of which doesn't help the story at all.

Jan: No, it distracts from the overall look of the book, and you never feel satisfied or happy with it. That's never a good thing. You really want to be happy with your work. Well, as happy as you can be. We're always our own worst critics, I think. I know I'm my own worst critic. I'm terrible to myself. [General laughter] But, hey, somebody's got to do it, right? [More general laughter.]

Sketch: Well, if all we heard was praise, we'd soon all turn into egomaniacs pretty quickly, wouldn't we? [Still more general

Jan: Exactly! Sketch: When it comes to the inking, what are you typically trying to do? I ask, because it sounds like in the past you were really more

concerned with delineation, and keeping everything crisp. Jan: Yeah, I was, I think I was afraid that if you lost detail that it wouldn't read correctly, that the reader wouldn't understand what's going on or something. And at that point, I didn't understand shadow well enough to utilize it. But lately it's something I've been studying a lot, and I think it's starting to...and again, it goes back to that sculptural aspect...where you start to understand light and shadow, and how light is falling on a face, and how things go back in space. How things have a dimension to them that's beyond the page. Maybe I had drawn for too long, and hadn't done enough three dimensional work or something, but I really attribute a lot of

So, when I'm approaching inking I try to think about the same kind of thing. I think about letting the white and the black fall into each other, and not trying to delineate every single little bit of detail. I'm not inking my own pencils right now, but when I pencil I'm trying to communicate with the inker on what I want to see there so he can follow it. And, most of the time I think I communicate it pretty well. Some times we have to talk and say, 'Okay, what did you mean by that?" [General laughter] "What I really meant to say was ... "

When you're working with a team of people, you're communicating with them in this language of drawing that is on the page, and you're hoping they're understanding what you're putting down. We all bring our own experiences with us when we draw, and those experiences affect how we translate what we see and how we draw. You don't know if they're getting exactly what you're saying. And then it goes on to the next person. It's kind of like playing telephone, sometimes. You know, the old game of telephone in which a word or phrase is passed around a group of people one by one? You might say "Potatoes," and by the end it's "Bananas"? [General laughter.]

Sketch: Right. And that's if it's even something edible. [More general laughter.]

Jan: Right. But that is essentially what we're trying to do. Right from the writing and the editing on down the line, you're trying to create a story that hangs together. And I'm sure writers experience a kind of frustration where they say something and the artist doesn't understand it at all, and puts something totally different down. And they must be saying, "Oh, why can't they do what I want?"

Sketch: What do you look for in an inker? Jan: I really appreciate an inker, like Ray Kryssing and Rick Magyar,

who can put down a really defined, clean line, but at the same time is not afraid to lay down a good heavy, solid black. They should be able to dirty things up by throwing some spatter across the page. They need emotion in their work too. I like it when an inker enhances expressions, and when they know how to lay in a fold and play with light and shadow. They shouldn't be afraid to forget about edges occasionally. The way things used to be colored we needed the edges to hold the color, but now the edges can soften or fall away and we can gain the kind of soft edges like you can get in a painting. Photoshop, Painter, and other programs that are used to color comics are wonderful. I'm finally seeing the kind of color and effects I only used to dream of before. So, part of what I look for in an inker has to be how their work plays back into what is being done with the color.

Sketch: Yeah, that's a whole 'nother thing that's had a huge impact, the whole revolution in that area. What kind of tools do you use to create your art?

Jan: Well, let's see. I mostly use mechanical pencils- I have a .03. .05, .07, and .09. I pick up any pencil I see at least once and try it out. I also use a regular HB pencil for shading. Sometimes I go back into shading with an eraser and pull out areas. And I vary the weights of the lead.

Sketch: What are some of the reasons you change the weight? Jan: It depends on the weather. [Laughter] I know that sounds weird, but in New Jersey it's kind of damp sometimes, it's kind of dry sometimes, and you might need a harder or softer lead depending on the weather. You don't want that nice hard lead digging channels into your paper. [Laughter] And on the really dry days that soft lead is smearing all over the place, so I tend to vary between them.

Sketch: How about the sharpness of your lead's tin? Do you vary that at different steps in your process?

Jan: Yeah, usually in thumbnailing I'll use a .05 or even a .09, because I don't want to get real detailed and real picky. And sometimes I'll even take the .07 and just kind of smear pencil all over the place when I'm just sketching, just so it's really roughed in. But then, when I'm doing little faces and things on the final board. I'll go in with the .03 and try not to break too many points as I'm doing it. [General laughter] They tend to snap pretty quickly. But for faces and that, I really like to get the detail in there.

Sketch: Now, for your roughs, are you fairly detailed with those? Are you including eyes and other features on the figures, or do you tend to stay fairly loose at that stage?

Jan: I tend to get pretty detailed. Sometimes on the roughs I'll even go in and totally draw a face just the way I want to see it on the finished board, except for maybe for a little bit of detail and shading and stuff. But I'll get the basic form in there, and I'll get the eyes and the nose and everything. Sometimes I want to make sure the expression conveys what I am thinking the character is feeling, and sometimes I just get lost in the drawing. I'll put the hands in too, kind of rough-looking as more of a gestural kind of thing. I don't want to lose the gestural quality later on when I start to draw on the actual board. Sometimes I'll lose a gesture or a face, but I figure there's another one lurking around somewhere your work? I mean, obviously, with the Star Wars stuff you have to in my brain so I don't agonize over it anymore.

Recently I've been doing covers that Dave McCaig is painting digitally on Photoshop. I'm really getting even more detailed than of the project. It's funny, though; a lot of my best faces don't usual with those. For those, I tend to do a pretty tight small rough on the layout paper, enlarge it on the lightbox so I can have a real nice, clean drawing to paint over since I like some of the pencil work to show through sometimes. Then I scan the cover in and email it to my editor, Randy [Stradley], and to Dave. I love amount of photo reference for the Star Wars Episode II adaptation. technology...

Sketch: So how important are the faces, and their expressions, to



Page from STAR WARS ongoing comic book. Pencils by Jan.

Jan: Tremendously important. To me, the expression on one face can carry an entire page. I really try to understand what's going on in a character's mind in order to bring it out in the expression on their face. And I'll spend a really ridiculous amount of time on one face, just because I want to get it to convey a particular feeling.

I'll also spend a lot of time on the expression of the eyes. I guess I really shouldn't do that, because it slows me down a lot, but if a reader can't feel what the character's feeling, what's the sense of reading the story? For me, a comic should be like a movie. In a movie, a close up is important. The best actors give a sense of their character through their eyes, their faces, and their expressions. The same rules apply to comics for me, and a lot of my work does kind of hang on that.

Sketch: With that in mind, do you use a lot of photo reference in use it to get the likenesses right, but what about in general?

Jan: Generally, I do use some photo reference. How much depends come from the photo reference, they come from out of my head. Although I will get some good basics from photo reference, I don't use it all the time. Mostly I use it if I'm having trouble figuring something out like hands or boots. I used a tremendous There's no way around it. It has to look like the actors, and it should look like the actors. I would feel kind of gypped if I got my Star Wars adaptation and it didn't look like the guys, you know?

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Sketch: Right, I mean, we're basically from the same generation, and I remember buying some movie and TV comic adaptations where the characters didn't look anything like their celluloid counterparts and you really did feel ripped off by that.

Jan: Yeah, you do. So I really use extensive photo reference for that. And you know, by using reference I've really learned a lot, too. It has helped me figure out some things about faces I was having difficulties with. I think it's helped my understanding of how faces work. I've come away from that project with a little more understanding of expression, more understanding of the planes of the face, and how features rest in those planes. Faces are something I've always been interested in. Not only beautiful faces, but character faces - really wrinkled faces, or faces with big noses, or strange hair, or a large chin, or an interesting brow or something. To me, that's where the real beauty of people comes from - from that different look that each of us has. It's fascinating to me. I guess that's why I like drawing aliens and Star Wars, because they're all different and weird looking, and they're beautiful, you know?

Sketch: As far as the Star Wars Episode II adaptation, did you work from a scene-by-scene series of photo references, or did they just give you a copy of the script and some character, environment, and other shots for reference?

Jan: Well, it would depend on the scene. Sometimes I would get as many as ten photos for a scene, if it was a really long scene. But there were some scenes they could give me no reference on because they hadn't been shot yet, or were being reshot. So I'd have the script, but I wouldn't have actual photos from a particular scene. It might be a four-page scene, And so Dave Land and Chris Cerasi at LFL would say, "Just do your best and imagine what it would

Artwork from the Darth Maul miniseries.



look like," "Okay!" [General laughter] So there are a couple scenes in the comic adaptation for which I had no photo reference, and I just had to use that regular comic book brain that I've got and draw from it. And, actually, it's funny, because I was told that my version of one scene they decided to reshoot really looked like one of the shoots they did of it.

But it doesn't really bother me. I tried to remain as true to the original script as I could, and tried to imagine within the frame of the reference that I did have, and draw from that, and try to imagine what the other scenes would end up like. That's really all you can do with something like that. If it's not shot, it's not shot. And our time frame is different than a film time frame. They're working digitally, and they can rework and change things right up to the last minute. We don't have the luxury of doing that in comics. Anyway. I guess it's a luxury, I don't know. [Laughter] I think it might be better this way.

Sketch: It all sounds like it would be a lot of fun, because all of a sudden, you get to literally be a director.

Jan: Yeah, exactly. Well, I think you're always sort of the director when you're drawing comics. You've got to be part director, you're part actor, part producer, you're

Sketch: The costume designer, and props person, and ...

Jan: Exactly! [General laughter] Lighting, set designer. You're making this little movie for yourself, and you can get lost in it, really and truly. But in a good way, I mean, I love being lost in my work. I love it when I sit down and suddenly I look up and it's five or six hours later. It means I've had a really good day.

Sketch: And you've got this pile of paper at your feet. Jan: Yeah, really. Crumpled up! [General laughter] No. Hopefully, I have actual drawings on my board, and they look good.

Sketch: When you ink, what kind of tools do you use?

Jan: Brushes...Kolinsky or Windsor-Newton series 7, # 2 and #3. Various technical pens...Mars-Staedler or Rotring Rapidoliners that come pre-filled, as pens tend to clog anyway. For pens I like Hunt 108s. But I do tend to use the tech pens for the really small details, and then use the brush for the outline, and the hair, and everything like that.

Sketch: Do you have a particular ink you like?

Jan: Yeah, Pelikan. It stays nice and black. I don't like the stuff that gravs out when you erase over it.

Sketch: Right. Is that the main reason you like that particular ink. because it's so opaque?

Ian: Well. I like that it's opaque: If you leave it open for a while, it has a lot of varnish in it, and it gets nice and sticky and shiny and dark. You don't need to worry about getting that gray look.

Sketch. What kind of erasers are you using these days?

Jan: I use a Mars-Staedler eraser. I'll also use the little tiny erasers that come on the mechanical pencils to erase small areas on faces and different things like that.

Sketch: Do your pages get kind of dirty and messy, or do you keep them relatively clean?

Jan: You know, my pages don't tend to get terribly messy. They really don't. I tend to work pretty clean.

Sketch: Okay. So it's more the roughs that get a bit dirty sometimes. Jan: Oh yeah. [Laughter] And sometimes the pages get that way a little bit too, but not usually.

Sketch: What about your final boards? Do you have any particular preferences concerning paper?

Jan: I'm so ultra-fussy when it comes to paper you wouldn't believe it! [General laughter] I've driven editors crazy. I like the Strathmore paper. And I don't like the real smooth stuff. And I don't like the real rough paper. I like the paper right in the middle. I'm Goldilocks, [More general laughter] The smooth stuff, the real shiny plate stuff, it's like glass. Your pencils are sliding all over the place, and it just takes me longer to draw on that. I have to really sit there and control the pencil. And the rough stuff, I just can't get the detail I want on it.

Sketch: Yeah, it's almost like it bumps your lead around,

Jan: Oh veah, it does. It's frustrating. It's a different touch, I think you can do it, but there's a different touch you have to use. Kind of a lighter, more intuitive touch to it, and I tend to really sit there and I really draw. Not always intuitively. Sometimes it's just I'm really drawing. I don't know how to describe it other than that. It's just part of the process I use.

Sketch: How about for inking? Do you use a different type of paper for that step?

Jan: No, I still like the same paper for inking. It's better.

Sketch: What about the actual weight or thickness of the paper? Do you care if it's a light or a heavier stock?

Jan: I usually get what the companies have, which is usually twoply. I tried to work on a heavier paper, too, but then it's harder to see your roughs on the lightbox, and that's no fun. [Laughter] I've done some painting on that, some watercolors, and airbrush stuff, and I've done it that way and I almost went blind. [General laughter 1

Sketch: Well, since you've brought it up, why don't we talk about painting for a little bit?

Jan: Okay. Usually, if I'm going to do a painting, I'll do a rough, and then I'll do a tighter rough, and then I'll do the same thing as if I would be doing a comic book page... I work from the tighter rough, and transfer it to the board. Then maybe I'll go back and tighten some more detail on the final drawing. Sometimes though, I'll just rough it out and draw it directly on the final board.

Sketch: Over the rough itself?

Jan: Yeah, leaving in all the rough pencil, because with some paint, it doesn't matter. Acrylic paints kind of go over everything anyway, so it doesn't really matter if there's a little bit of a mess there. It doesn't really bother me and can make the finish look kind of interesting.

Sketch: What's your approach to painting? Are you trying to go for a certain look, like a slick realism?

Jan: I don't really aim towards a photographic-type style of realism. Usually what I'm trying to do is the same thing I'm doing with comics. I'm trying for my own take on reality, and not worrying so much that it's going to look like a photo to somebody. I'm more concerned about the emotional quality of the piece. I guess that sounds a little vague, but I want somebody to get a feeling when they see the picture. I don't want them to say, "Wow, that hand is perfect!" What I like them to say is, "This gives me the feeling of being cold," or, "I really feel that character's anger," or something like that. That's more important to me.

Sketch: Okay, so a little bit of exaggeration and stylization will be built into it, then.

Jan: I think so. The same as with my comic book work. I exaggerate certain aspects of the drawing in order to make a point,

Sketch: Right. And that's just built into it, and part of the nature of the heast Jan: Right.

Sketch: What kind of paints do you use?

Jan: I was using a type of acrylic paints called Dr. Martin's Spectralites that you can use in an airbrush, but I was painting with Sketch: That's got to be really interesting for you.

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them. I really liked them because they would dry pretty quickly, and I could layer them, and they wouldn't peel up, and I would get some nice effects that way. I've always wanted to work with more oils again like I did in college, but I'm just not set up for it here. It's something I've always been meaning to do, but I've been super busy with comic book work ... and loving it ...

Sketch: It's also incredibly time consuming, what with having to wait so long between coats and such.

Jan: Yeah, it is. The time factor is an important thing, especially with publishing in comics. Projects always were due vesterday. and you don't have the luxury of being able to wait a week or two for oils to dry.

Sketch: So you can apply the second coat. Jan: Exactly, yeah.

Sketch: What kind of brushes were you using?

Jan: Again, with the airbrush paints I was using the Windsor-Newton brush, and then some smaller brushes. Nice, fine sable ones for detail, and then I'd have some fan-type ones that I would do effects with. Another larger, flatter brush to do more large areas, another one for dry brush. Flats and rounds of different sizes. Mostly rounder watercolor brushes. I like flats better for oil painting. But if I want a certain kind of effect, to build up a little bit with an effect, I would get a flatter brush and kind of dry brush an area and build it up. But now I'm starting to do painting in Photoshop. So that's a lot of fun, too.

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Jan: Oh, it's great and fast and I'm really surprised at the paint-like effects you can achieve with it. Sometimes I make a scan of a painting I've done and add effects in on the computer. That's great. The only drawback is the lack of the original.

Sketch: Is that something we'll be seeing from you in the future? Jan: I just finished a solicitation cover for Star Wars #45.

Sketch: Are you thinking of doing mostly covers and pin-ups that way, or might we see some sequential work done that way, too? Jan: I don't know. Doing the sequential work that way is time-consuming, and with my regular schedule there's no way for me to do a lot of painting. I'd like to try some covers because they are fun. Right now, I'm working with Dave McCaig on four covers for the Star Wars ongoing issues #s 42-45.

Sketch: About how long does the typical painting take you to do, from start to finish?

Jan: You know, it depends. If I had to, I could probably finish a painting in a week. The solicitation cover for [the Star Wars] ongoing took about four to five hours, but it needed to be in the next day.

Sketch: Would those be eight-hour days?

Jan: Oh, longer than eight-hour days. Probably twelve hour days. I usually get to work by 8:00 AM, and finish up about 5:00 PM, then I feed the kids and run, or we all go out to exercise classes somewhere. I break until 9-9:30PM and work until 12:00, 1:00 at night. My days right now are not typical, unfortunately. I've just got so much to do. The adaptation took longer than I was expecting. It's just the nature of the beast. Referencing all that material just takes a long time.

Sketch: Well that's understandable, since you have to get those likenesses and the action just right. And then, seeing as it's someone like yourself, who's so exacting about that work ...

Jan: I want it to be just right, and I keep re-penciling pages. I'm being too fussy, I guess. It's just what I do. [Laughter.]

Sketch: Well, how long does a page take you to do? Obviously, the Star Wars adaptation takes you a bit longer, but would a page usually take you about a day to draw?

Jan: I can usually draw about page a day, or at least a page and a half of figures. Occasionally I might draw figures on three or four pages all at once, and then go back in later and do backgrounds and some of the techie stuff. I'll get all my gun and lightsaber reference together at the same time and try to be consistent with the details for each characters' weapons. I take the same approach with backgrounds, and try to get the reference together for each setting and do them all at the same time.

Sketch: How particular are you about showing the details of the backgrounds and settings? Does all of that just help put everything in context, and lend weight to the scene, or can you see sometimes letting that all finds away to go with color washes and such?

Jan: I do both. I like to have both approaches on the same page. I think it works well to have a very intricate background in one panel and let the color dominate the background in another panel, so it becomes more painted looking, almost a portrait type background. One offsets the other very nicely, it's important to me to give a sense of place, especially in the Star Wars material. I want to make sure that people know where we are, because we visit so many different planets, sometimes establishing each as we 80.

In the adaptation we're visiting at least four planets, and each one of them has a different look. When I'm working on the [Star Wars | ongoing series, I try to do the same kind of thing - whether we're on Ryloth, Coruscant, or Tatooine, I want a unique look to each place. The Dune Sea on Tatooine has to be different than the Endless Wastes of Kintan. These are places a lot of the fans have read about, and I don't want to disappoint them by making them all look alike. For instance in the arc I'm working on, I'm drawing the cave interiors on a planet called Ryloth. The Twi'leks of Ryloth have a sophisticated society so the caves have a carved and technological look combined with natural formations, which I thought they would value. I created places in the cave where there are these basalt-type stairs formed like the Giants Causeway in Ireland, and I utilize those stairs throughout their caves. Another thing I thought would be fun, and would give the caves an eerie light, were windows made from living, glowing lichen. I also added carved symbols on the rocks that they might be able to read with their fingers in the semi-darkness, like a combination of Egyptian carving and Braille. It's a lot of fun, trying to think beyond just "A cave that has got stalactites and stalagmites." [General laughter| And instead, try to use the stalactites and stalagmites as furniture, as decoration, as doorways, that kind of thing. I want this to be a place you can visit beyond looking at the page. A place you can think about and imagine yourself being in.

Sketch: Capturing the idea that these particular environments extend beyond that image on the page.

Jan: Exactly. It goes back to why I love to draw this type of material. I want to make the unimaginable real.

Sketch: Now, when you do choose to go beyond that detailed, real kind of background and move into the use of colors as background...what are some of the reasons you choose to do that? Jan: If you have a really detailed background, sometimes utilizing only color in another background can give the eye a break. If every panel is chock full of detail nothing is going to call to the reader to look at it. I think putting in a painterly background helps pop the detailed background as well. If I detail every single panel.

all of a sudden it's going to become a jumble, so I like to see a variety of different approaches on the page. Many times I'll put a black background in the back of everything on the largest panel of the page and let the other panels float on top of it, just to create a different kind of space for them to be in, almost like putting them in a different dimensional plane than the background panel. I like doing that. It's something that's been working for me lately, so I do a lot of it. [Laughter.]

Sketch: Well, I think that a lot of time the reader will fill those empty spaces in mentally without realizing it, because you've already supplied so much specific detail about those environs elsewhere.

Jan: And a lot of times you don't really need a background in every panel. I think it becomes extraneous. I like to use a lack of background as a design element, or use a piece of background as a design element. I really enjoyed working on 'Ghost' because it was set in a ruined area of a planet, and the ruins became pure design elements fading in and out of the mist and smoky light.

Sketch: Right. At that point you might as well go the whole hog, like Geof Darrow does in Hard Boiled or Big Guy and Rusty the Boy Robot, and make it all one page. If you want to get that detailed. [General laughte:] You mentioned earlier that you seem to find doing the sequential story pages easier than doing covers and pin ups. Do you almost have to mentally shift gears when movine between the two?

Jan: I think I do. When I get to the single image for a cover or a pin up, I want to put too much of the story into it. I want to tell the whole story, instead of just that one frozen moment in time, and I tend go back and forth between key moments. I'll say, "This is best image!" "No, I like that one better. You know, "Which idea do I use?" Sometimes I'll draw several panels to see which would be the best aspect of that action to capture. So I'm essentially doing a sequential kind of layout before I decide on the one image I want. It helps me make that kind of transition, to shift gears and go from one to the other. I drive myself crazy trying to figure out which scene I want to do from something. But then as I start doing the storytelling, the right image just comes to me.

Sketch: How about character design?

Jan: I love character design. It's one of my favorite parts of this, so I'm glad you asked about it. [Laughter] I love designing new characters

John Ostrander and I needed to find a Jedi for a story arc we wanted to do in the Star Wars ongoing series. We asked if we could design a Jedi for this, or find one somewhere in Episode I. We ended up seeing Episode I again to try to find a suitable character for this Jedi. We ended up designing the character of Quinlan Vos around a really quick image of this background character who is on the screen for, like, three frames. I only got to see him in the movie. I didn't have the video or anything to freeze-frame at the time, so I had to design the character around the quick image that I saw. I put the Jedi robes on him, of course, but I had to design the hair, the face, and the way the character moved. Then I got to design the characters around him in the story, and we came up with the character of Aayla Secura, his Twi'lek Padawan, who was never going to appear in more than one panel. Now she's going to appear in Attack of the Clones, and there was a picture of her in Time magazine. I think that is amazingly cool, since I have been a Star Wars fan forever!

Sketch: That's a real compliment to the design, there.

Jan: Oh, yeah. It's one of those really amazing and wonderful and cool things in life, you know? [More general laughter] I guess I'm a fangirl, but it's pretty amazing. Designing her was a lot of fun as well. She was designed off of the Twi'lek dancer Oola in Jabba's palace in Return of the Jedt. I'd read somewhere in Tales from Jabba's Palace that one of the dancers with Oola had tattoos on her head tails. I thought that would be unique, so I put them on



"Picture of the actress --Amy Allen--who plays Alayla in STAR WARS: Episode II Attack of the Clones." Jan Duursema

Aayla. At first she wasn't going to survive the first arc of Twilight. But my daughter, Sian, begged us not to kill the character. She felt there were too few really cool female Jedi, and that there needed to be more of them. So, I give her credit for saving Aalya for the next arc, and now this next arc we're working on, and for the movie. too. Funny how things work out.

Sketch: Is part of the reason you enjoy designing characters so much tied in to your love of creating a feeling of a specific place and culture?

Jan: Well, yeah. Fascination with places, people, and faces. I try to design a face to fit a character. I don't know if we all suit our own faces, but when you're drawing comic books you kind of tag people with their faces. We always have that the evil guy, of course, has to look a certain way, and the evil girl who has to look a certain way. [General laughter] But beyond that, I try to figure out different looking good guys and bad guys. I've tried to design characters to be a little more severe or stern, even though they're a good character. For instance, Quinlan's master is an older Jedi, and he's got a real stern aspect about him. Then Quin is very brooding and dark, and Aayla's very calm and focused. I want to design different kinds of characters, so you get a sense of knowing these people. It's a fun challenge, and I really enjoy coming up with characters who are going to keep your interest in the story as the artist, and keep the readers' interest as well.

Sketch: Well, speaking of challenges, what are some of the things you have to keep in mind when you're working with licensers? Jan: I think the biggest thing you have to keep in mind is it's their property and they have the final say. In everything, All of the time. You have to be willing to create within that license, and to let it go. You can't become proprietary because other people will be working with your characters and places you create. You might

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Page from STAR WARS ongoing comic book. Pencils by Jan.

bring the characters to life, but then you have to be willing to let them take a walk on their own. But I take such joy in doing this that it doesn't bother me. I'm getting paid for my pages, so designing the characters, the worlds they adventure in, and everything else involved is part of that. I want to design memorable characters that I will enjoy working with and others will enjoy using in the future. To try and save my 'best' designs for some future project would be cheating myself and the readers.

I guess that's the biggest issue for a lot of creators; when working with licensers, you really have to be willing to play in their sandbox and put all the toys away nicely when you're done. [General laughter| You can't take over other people's characters, or think you know what's best for their characters. You really have to understand their parameters and work within them. It sounds like maybe it'd be a difficult thing to do, and I think, for a lot of people, it is. It doesn't bother me, though. I'm having the best time of my career working in the Star Wars universe.

Sketch: What are some of the secondary concerns that might pop up, but might not be so obvious?

Jan: Well, keeping to the format, and knowing enough to work within their world easily. You need to know a lot of intricacies of what a licenser is doing in order to be able to navigate within their policies and needs. There's the character stuff, their universe's structure, what certain aliens can do, and what they can't do. It's the same as with any comic book; you have to understand what the characters are all about.

Sketch: Right. You want to do new things, tell new stories, but you can't break the rules ... in the wrong way.

Jan: Yeah, exactly. Telling the story within the rules is important. And the likenesses are important, if you're doing something that's licensed, like an adaptation. But, beyond that, I really feel like Jan: Yeah. I've had a lot of freedom doing this work. They've let me draw a

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lot of really cool stuff, and I've been really happy doing it. I'm having a heck of a lot of fun! [Laughter.]

Sketch: The Star Wars gig really is a fangirl dream come true for

Jan: Oh. truly! [General laughter] Yeah.

enough for him to be able to use it.

Sketch: Right, because from our different conversations, I know that you've got not just one but several light sabers of your own, don't you?

Jan: Yeah. [Laughter] Yeah. I've got a couple. I even have a light saber that's designed after one I designed for the Jedi character Quinlan Vos. I had that saber built by someone who builds sabers and was doing some custom ones. Knowing I had designed the saber another customer asked for, he asked me if I'd like one too. I said, "Heck yes!" [General laughter] It's really beautiful...no, it's gorgeous!

Sketch: Did you have to supply some blueprints for him? Jan: No. he just looked at the comic books, and took the design right out of there. So I guess I did something that was detailed

Sketch: That's another good compliment, right there.

Jan: Yeah, I guess so. [Laughter] Now I have this great light saber for reference. Who could ask for anything more? [General

Sketch: Well, since we're talking about props and such, do you ever stage shots for use as photo reference?

Jan: Occasionally. Mostly, what I have trouble with is hands. Hands drive me nuts, so a lot of times I'll draw the body, but if I need a hand holding a light saber, a blaster or something like that. I'll do my own photo reference for it. Tom usually helps me out. He holds a lot of blasters and a lot of light sabers. Sometimes I'll hold a gun or saber too if it's for a female character, in order to get the proportions right. It's kind of a lot of fun. I don't usually stage the entire pose and put the lighting up or anything like that. I know if I was painting more I think I would. But for what I'm doing, I can supply the lighting.

Sketch: So you're trying to get the gesture there?

Jan: Exactly. How the hands hold things has been an interesting problem for me. What do the fingers do? Sometimes I use reference shots for full poses as well - if it's something that I need to have in an intense perspective or something, I'll do a shot of that. Pointing a blaster away from you is one of the big ones.

Sketch: Oh, yeah. [General laughter] What are your work habits, generally? You mentioned earlier that you'd been doing twelvehour days recently, which led to me wondering what a typical workday might be for you?

Jan: Well, if I was back to my typical work day, I'd probably work a couple of hours in the morning, and then take off for a little while. My son is in kindergarten and has mornings off, so I'd take a little time off for him. I do what I can with my current schedule, but he's a bit of a feral child, right now. [General laughter] But I'm always here for him, too, so it's not that bad. I work a full afternoon while the kids are at school, and take some time off for exercise and dinner, then go back to the board until twelve or one [AM]. I don't work in the evenings if I don't have anything pressing, but generally, the evening hours are so nice and quiet that it's not a bad thing to be working then. So, I guess my typical workday is pretty much like it is now. [General laughter] But I do tend to work more than eight-hour days. At least ten hours, usually twelve-hour days

Sketch: And that'd be actual work time, then.

Sketch: Is that pretty much the pace you've always kept?

Jan: I used to work fewer hours, but I think I was being a little less intricate with the pages. I think maybe by simplifying, I made things more complicated. [Laughter] No, not really. I think what it is, is I'm trying for a more realistic style now, and that usually takes more time. A lot more reference to look up. And, with the Star Wars stuff, there is a lot more reference on blasters, light sabers, costumes, established settings, and just about everything, I try to be as true to that as I can be to the reference. The downside is, when you lose a piece of reference, you're looking for it for several hours. [General laughter]

Sketch: How do you manage having the kind of full, involved family life and the professional one you do, even with both you and Tom working at home?

Jan: It's a tag team. We tag team the kids. [General laughter] He'll pay attention to them for a while, and then I will, and we go back and forth, and then they're on their own for a bit.

Sketch: So it seems to be pretty balanced, then.

Jan: Yeah, it's pretty balanced. If he has an intense workday, I'll take over more of the duties of being the mom, and if I have an intense workday, he does the dad time. But because we're both here, the kids have us here all the time, so it's nice for them. Even though we're working, we're accessible, and they can come to us with any questions, or concerns, or fights that need solving or whatever, [General laughter] So it's nice. I think it's nice to be here for them, as well.

Sketch: How do you handle going to cons, because I know that you guys do attend a few?

Jan: Usually only about two a year. Although I think we might do three or four this year. They will come with us for two of them. We like to do some that are more local, so we can drive to and take them with us.

Sketch: How about keeping to your schedule work-wise? Do you just try to get ahead a bit beforehand, and then really jam afterwards?

Jan: Well, yeah. Pretty much. [General laughter] I mean, you work like crazy before, work like crazy after, and hope it all gets done. I can pick up my pace a little when I need to, and I'll probably have to do that if I want to go to some cons this year. [Laughter] But you just try to work a lot longer before, work a lot longer after, and it sort of balances itself out. Don't take weekends off. Not that I'm doing that now! [General laughter] I'm working weekends, but that's Okay, It's not for too much longer. You figure. with the cons and stuff, you put in an extra weekend or two, and then you're all caught up.

Sketch: What's your work environment like? Do you keep it fairly clean and organized, or ...? Jan: [Laughter.]

Sketch: Or is it like my office? [General laughter.]

Jan: Right now, it's pretty messy. And I'm working in a separate room for the Star Wars stuff, because the movie's all top secret stuff, and I couldn't have anybody just walking in the studio and seeing it, so I had to keep it separate from everything else. And it's I'll listen to. a pigsty. [Laughter] It's just paper - reams of paper. But it's all separate and away from everything. So at least nobody else has to

Sketch: Is that typical of your work space, though? Do you keep things a bit cleaner when you're not working on top secret stuff? Jan: No. [General laughter.]

Sketch: Hey, at least you're honest, you know? Jan: Really. I have to be honest. It's not terrible. It's not where you



frenzies where you really have to crank out the work things get a little crowded, and then you do a big clean up. That's the way we both work though. We do the big mess, the big clean up, and then you sort of work towards the big mess again. [General laughter.]

Sketch: Things accumulate. That's just life.

Sketch: Do you listen to music, or have a TV on while you work? Jan: Not TV. I really can't work with the TV on, but I do listen to music on occasion. Sometimes I just like real plain old quiet, with nothing else going on. That's something that I rarely get. But the TV is usually on, so I listen to Cartoon Network. [Laughter.]

Sketch: That's a great soundtrack, right there. Jan: Oh yeah. Nickelodeon, Cartoon Network, all that good stuff.

Sketch: Is there a particular type of music you prefer to hear while working, if you do play it then?

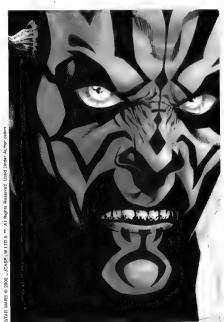
Jan: Rock and roll. Some blues. Soundtracks. Irish music. A lot of variety, a lot of different artists. Usually whatever Tom puts on,

Sketch: What kind of suggestions do you have for aspiring artists? For instance, do you think that school training might help, and why or why not?

Jan: I can only talk from my own experience, and I know that going to school helped me in a couple of different respects. First and foremost, you learn from professionals. Because you talk to professionals, and you understand a little more how they're thinking and get to hear a lot of their experiences. It helps you to learn how the business works. You also get critiques from professionals, and can't walk through the room. But if you get in one of those work learn how to handle that. Hopefully, you learn how not to say to That's one of the first things I tell people if they ask my opinion of their work. I believe that a critical eye helps us learn, so I'm pretty honest with my criticism, though I try to be kind. They then proceed to explain to me why they did something. It's something have to question yourself. So sometimes rejection is a good thing, I'm aware of because making excuses is something that I used to do a lot, and probably still do on occasion. Editors don't want to hear that. They don't want to know why you did something; if it doesn't work, it doesn't work

School can help you get that all out of your system. You get a thicker skin, hopefully, because you learn how to take criticism so the first time that an editor says to you, "Well, that really stinks," it doesn't blow you away totally. Not that anybody's ever really to use a ruler for my straight lines. And he was right I've heard point? stories from other people who have had rough experiences, so I know there is the possibility that someone could say they don't like my work I've been rejected because my work did not appeal to someone, and a rejection could really hurt. But if you've kind of hardened your shell a little bit by going to school and getting Jan: I've heard beginning artists say, "Nobody wants my work I critiques, you can put it into perspective. And I think you can go can't break into the industry " And I ask them if they are drawing back to your drawing board, fine tune the areas that need work, and come back out punching.

I know that kind of training helped me, because for a couple years I didn't have very much work. It seemed like the style I was working in didn't appeal to anyone. So I had to go back and rethink and reinvent what I was doing in order to appeal to the current look, and the current expectations that people have. I think if I didn't have that kind of mindset I would just never have drawn again



an editor, "Well, I meant to do that because..", and make excuses Sketch. Do you think that having to adapt your work has helped you grow as an artist?

Jan: Oh. absolutely. Sometimes you reach a certain level in your work, and you can kind of ride on that for a long time. You never because it makes you question what you're doing. That may guide you to that next level you need to be at. I never want to feel like I've reached the highest level I can get to. I always want to feel like there's something to strive for. Every time I put pencil to paper, I'm always thinking about trying something a little bit new, reaching to get a little more out of my work, beating myself over the head a few more times and trying to develop as an artist. I just can't see ever stopping doing that, because I think if you've said that to me The worst critique I got is when an editor told me stopped doing that you've stopped growing. Then, what's the

> Sketch: What are some of the things that aspiring artists should keen in mind if they want to break into the business, aside from the things you just mentioned?

the kind of things that editors want to see. They tell me, "No, because I want to draw this way." Like it or not, generally, you've got to draw for the medium to break in. There's a huge amount of leeway within that framework. But if you're not drawing stuff that's going to appeal to your favorite super hero editor, if it's not the thing he likes, don't expect him to buy it! If your work is that different and you truly believe in it, then you have to keep looking for the editor that your style will appeal to.

A lot of us get this idea, and some of it's partly the fault of some art teachers .early in life you're told, "Don't look at anything. Draw from your head, draw from your imagination," [Laughter] Your imagination is a wonderful thing. I draw from my imagination all the time, so cultivate that too But if you want to draw realistically, or to give your own style a sense of reality, you've got to draw from reality. You can't draw a hand without knowing what a hand looks like You've got to have your basics down And a lot of people don't want to hone their basics, or they don't want to look at a real face in order to draw a real face. They want it to just sort of come out of their head like it's some kind of a magic thing that's just going to happen. It's not. You have to look at stuff Look at people, trees - look at cars, buildings, horses. Get your reference, and sit down with it, and really study it, and really try to draw from it. Sketch from an actual moving, human form. We want to forget these steps and go on to the final thing, and it just doesn't happen.

The other thing to keep in mind is storytelling. It's something that editors look for in a page. It's a common mistake for beginning artists to draw pages that have all medium and close-up shots. It's important to vary your distances and camera angles. Try to move that camera around in your mind and visualize the scene from various angles, then sketch them out as you visualize them. I usually try out more than one angle on a panel and choose the one that works best with the page. I also find it helpful to work on an overlay with my roughs. That way I can tilt the angle of the drawing a little in the finished panel, and add more dynamics to the page if it needs it.

Sketch: Right One of the things that's popping into my head at the moment is a wish that some artists had seen and studied an actual woman's form, for instance.

Jan That would be nice. [General laughter.]

Sketch: And then they can exaggerate the form, from that basis in

Jan: Exactly The best artists know what the female form looks like, and how to exaggerate it. Many others seem to exaggerate from the exaggerated forms they have only seen in comic books, and that's where they get into trouble. And that's another beginner's problem drawing only from comic books If you want to draw

comics, you need to look at them. I think that there are many artists in this industry who have a ton of knowledge to offer about the craft, but, to be well rounded, you've got to look at artists outside of the medium. You've got to look at painters; you've got to look at illustrators. You've got to go back and look at N. C. Wyeth, and Howard Pyle. You've got to go back and look at Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci. You've got to look at art through history. You've got to look at the early comic books, early cartooning, early comic strips, because there's a lot of storytelling lessons there that hold true today

You've got to look at movies, and video games. Video games are just incredible! I think a beginning artist should look at them, because you're seeing somewhat simplified figures moving in three dimensions, and you can learn from that. You can learn by picking up a magazine and drawing faces. Magazines are also a great way to keep current with fashion, which is important in what we do in comics. Anything an artist sees is absorbed into their brain, and it's going to come out your hands somehow But if you're not really looking at the things around you, then you're depriving yourself of something that's really important for your growth as an artist.

Sketch. Now, just to put a fine point on it, you're not just saying to conv all of these people but to observe and absorb the good things, and learn from their mistakes, right?

Jan: Right, exactly But truthfully, it doesn't hurt to copy things, even trace things. Put a photo on a lightbox and trace it. Do it ten times. Do ten different faces Learn expression from that. But Sketch: Yeah Yeah, I mean one of the things that seems to make go back and take what you've learned from those faces and apply it to your own style

A great exercise is to take a picture and put it on a lightbox. Rough it out, lay in the eyes, and lay in all the proportions over a real face. And then put the picture next to the rough, and draw from the picture over your rough layout. There's a lot of different ways of working it back and forth, but basically if you want to draw realistically, or draw with any sense of realism - which is what a lot of comic books require - you've got to understand the form and function of the body, and form and function of your surroundings You've got to study perspective. You've got to try to understand machines. Knowing how to portray different kinds of weather conditions can lend a sense of reality and atmosphere to your drawing. How a drop of water falls into puddle can become an important aspect of a composition,

When I did the Darth Maul mini-series, there was a page where Darth Maul has had his hand stabbed, and he's clenching his hand, so a drop of blood falls down into the water and creates an eye shape. Now, if I didn't know how drops fell into water, and what kind of an effect it would create. I couldn't draw it.

Sketch: Much less make it look like an eye, as well.

Jan: Exactly! And that's where your imagination comes into play. You're taking reality and translating it into something else with your imagination, and putting it down on paper. That's where the magic comes in, and what I think beginners need to learn. You don't need to take directly from reality and put it down perfectly. but to draw images from reality, and to mix it with your imagination and put it down on the page. That's when your art starts to move, and starts to have a kind of life and reality of its

I know that beginning artists will trace a figure, and then trace a bunch of figures, or do backs of heads so they don't have to draw faces [General laughter] Put hands in pockets, that kind of thing. So take that hand out of that pocket, and then look at a hand - take a picture of a hand, if you have to, in that position - and draw it. Don't be afraid of reality, I guess, is what I'm saying. We're told, sometimes, to ignore reality and the work of others. Early on, in school, I was told not to copy. There was this misconception that it is cheating. I think copying is a great artistic exercise That's how all the great artist apprentices learned. They copied from life

and copied from their masters. Look at Michelangelo and other great masters, and copy their drawings. And then look at a comic book artist you like, and copy their drawings. And then get ... I don't know, pictures of something and copy it, anything you can cony, in order to be able to understand reality. And bring your imagination into the mix.

Sketch: Right, filter reality through yourself, and make it your

Jan. Each of us has a different personality, a unique reality, and a different style. Your style doesn't have to be like anybody else's And the personality of your work doesn't have to be like anybody else's. But you have to try to do your best work within the style you choose. Be yourself, I guess, is basically what I'm saving. And I say this from experience, because at one point in my career. I tried to draw like everybody else was drawing in order to get the work. I got the work, but I was never 100% satisfied with my work. I felt like it wasn't completely my vision. Now, I'm feeling like my work is closer to what I've always seen in my mind. And I've come around to that feeling through the experience of not having work, of not being able to please myself or anybody else I decided that my work had to satisfy me first, and then I would. hopefully, please my editors

Sketch: And the readers, of course Jan: Yeah, I hope so! [General laughter.]

then, go back and do your own drawing. Not over those faces, but your job so satisfying is not just being able to make yourself and your bosses happy, but then making those readers happy too Now that's got to be a great feeling!

> Jan. Yeah, that's true. Still, I don't think the work I was doing at that period of time was bad. Readers have come up to me and told me they thought that work was great And when I let myself see it through their eyes. I understand what they like, But I did feel like





Panels from STAR WARS ongoing comic book. Pencils by Jan.

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I wasn't being true to what I visualized.

Sketch: But that's all part of your personal learning process. Jan. It absolutely is, yeah.

Sketch, Let's talk about comics in general for a little bit. What's good about the market right now?

Jan. I think what's good about it is that I see a lot of different styles coming in that are really unusual. What I don't see a lot of is different genres. You see a lot of super-hero stuff, still, but you don't see a lot of, like, westerns, and a lot of fantasy and science Sketch: Is there anything else that you re really enjoying these fiction. It seems to be pretty much "same old same old" with days? super-hero stuff

Sketch: Right, And unfortunately, even when you do find examples of these genres out there, many of them seem to be drawing from the same well, and there's a kind of sameness to some of them. Jan: Yeah, that's true, But the unfortunate truth is that fantasy and science fiction don't sell that well. Star Wars sells because it's Star Wars. And the different genre books you do see are there because there is a license or a property behind them. It's just tough to sell anything but super-heros. And I think maybe the readers just aren't interested, or not enough people are interested. I'm not that,

Sketch: I think at the same time, though, that really good work will out. One of the examples that springs to mind is the Lone Wolf and Cub reprints that Dark Horse is doing so well with

Jan: Well, there's something about that material that really transcends basic comics, to me,



Sketch, Right, and culture, too

Ian Yeah, Absolutely It's got a lot of spirit and vision, which is something that I think more of us should be working toward. It's got soul It understands honor You can see the character in the faces, and you can understand the gravity and intensity of the situations. The samurai and the culture they lived within have always interested me. I guess that's part of the appeal of Star Wars for me The Jedi are the samural. I try to bring that to the books I

Jan. I haven't had a lot of time to do a lot of reading right now, so I look at things that are put in front of my face, pretty much. But I've seen things like Wolverme's Origin, which I've really been enjoying. I've been enjoying both the writing and art on that. And I've been enjoying Creeps, but Tom is doing that, so it's like I say; it has to be in front of my face or I'm not seeing it right now

Sketch: And I've gotta say that the coloring on that book has just been outstanding, too

Jan. Oh yeah, I think that Frank Cuonzo is doing a great 10b on

Sketch: I was telling Tom when I saw you folks at Mid-Ohio Con that I don't think his work has ever looked better. And that's saying a lot, considering the people who've colored his work in the past

Jan Yeah Well, Frank lets the art show through. It's pretty neat. I'm trying to think what else I've been looking at lately Like I say, I look at a lot of the Star Wars books, because I try to keep up with all of those, and I've been enjoying a lot of those. I like the Daredevil book that's out right now. It's really neat And there's a Nightcrawler [mmi-series] that just came out that I've been enjoying a lot, too. And I'm sure there's a lot of other really good books out there, but like I say, I just don't see that much because I don't have the time in the day to do it, and they come through so quickly.

Sketch. Yeah, it would be hard since you've essentially got two full time 10bs at present.

Jan Yeah, that's true [Laughter] That's true. When do I have time to read? I've got to play catch up when I'm done with this project.

Sketch: There you go And that'll give everyone who's reading this a good reason to send you copies of their books, or give them to you at shows, so you can read them.

Jan. There you go! "Yeah, give me your books. I want to read them!" [General laughter]

Sketch: Are there any characters or titles that you've always wanted to work on, but haven't had the chance yet? Do you have a dream project, aside from the gig you've got now?

Jan' I was going to say I'm working on my dream job; I don't think I want anything else right now. You know, I could stay with Star Wars for a very long time, and I'd be very, very happy. I've done some X-stuff I've done X-Factor, I've done a little bit of X-Men, and it was a lot of fun It was my kind of super-hero stuff. You know: a little bit different, and I liked the characters a lot. Those books have strong female characters and interesting looking male characters. Not everybody had the same kind of a face or body type. That always makes things more interesting. Basically, I'm on the top of the mountain I am hoping I could stay here for

Sketch. Do you have any aspirations of eventually creating your own property?

Jan. Not right now, no. I've tried it a few times, and it's a difficult thing to try to figure out what people like, and then to get it published, and everything else. I'm just not interested in pursuing that part of it at this point. I know it probably sounds strange, but

it doesn't hold any appeal to me right now [Laughter.]

Sketch. Well, you've got some great toys to play with right now. Jan Oh, yeah. Truly [General laughter]

Sketch, And you're working with some great writers, too, Jan: Yeah Who can ask for anything more, right? It's something that comes along pretty rarely in this business. I think

Sketch. Especially for an extended period, too.

Jan: Yeah. And I never really thought I'd be working on Star Wars books. I did one issue of Star Wars for Marvel back in the eighties: issue #92. And at the time. I was probably not the first choice of artists for the book. They had some really incredible artists on the book, and I would never have even thought about asking to do the book, but they needed a fill-in at the time, and I was available. And I really enjoyed it. But I never thought I'd ever he doing more than that. Certainly never thought I'd be doing an adaptation for a movie

Sketch: What do you get from creating your work? One of the reasons I ask is because I get the sense that even if you were, say, a waitress, or an engineer, you would still be drawing and creating art, that art is part of who you are

Jan: Oh, it is, I pretty much have to draw. When I took that time away from drawing. I realized how large of a part of my identity drawing was and how much I missed it I don't feel like me unless I'm drawing It's always been a part of me. When I draw comic books I know I'm drawing for other people, so I'm telling my stories so everybody else can see them. That sharing is an important part of being an artist/ storyteller. Even if someone else is writing it, it's still my story too because I'm staging it, and directing it, and all the rest of it.

What do I get from it? When I create a new character or complete a page I get a real thrill from it. It feels good to put those drawings on paper, and to read the story later on At that point I kind of take myself away from the fact that I did it, and just read it to enjoy it. Drawing is kind of like breathing. I never thought about not doing it, you know what I mean?

Sketch Yes It's just essential.

Jan: It is essential. And if I couldn't draw, I don't know what I would do If I couldn't draw comics, what would I do? I'm not qualified for anything else! [General laughter.]

Sketch. What do you hope your readers get from your work? Jan: I hope they enjoy the story and the characters. I'd like the characters to leave a lasting impression on them. I hope the story takes them on a nice journey, takes them on a little out-of- body experience, that they really get wrapped up in the story You know, the kind of feeling you get with a really good book. You get just engrossed in it, you just don't want to leave it. You've read books like that. I'm sure.

Sketch. Oh veah.

Jan: And you don't want to come back. When you're done with it, for a little while you have a kind of sense of missing a part of yourself. And then you think about it, you say, "Oh yeah. I wish I was back in that place I was in when I was reading that book," It's a tall order, but that's what I'd like to leave a reader with. I'd like them to feel like they've really been in the story in a galaxy far, far away.



"From a story titled "Darkness" from STAB WARS ongoing issue #35) Originally, I wanted a profile image of two Jedi passing by one another with lightsabers as they made their cuts. At the last minute, I changed view--and a nice S-shape pattern occurred in the composition. Another reason to move your camera around!" Jan Duursema



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The kids have to be dropped off at school, you have a dental appointment, the plumber's coming to fix the kitchen sink, and your wife needs your help carrying some of your crap to the basement because her parents are coming for a visit - and she's tired of explaining that they're your toys all over the house.

script done by end of business day today.

Do you feel like writing today?

Do you have to write today?

Only if you want to keep your job.

Unless you've hit the lottery or are willing to live in a scary neighborhood, then you'll probably need to write at least two monthlies to live at some reasonable standard in the USA. This means you'll always have deadlines. And as a writer it all begins with you. If your work is late then the penciler is left to re-think those offers from that other company, your inker does whatever the heck it is inkers do when they're not inking, your letterer loses sleep over the mortgage, and your colorist calls the editor every day wondering when more work is coming.

So, once in awhile you'll have to write when you're distracted or sick or sleepy or just plain would rather do anything else.

MY WIFE: Honey, the kids and I are going to the park to spread honey on ourselves and roll on an

Aw, gosh. I'd love to come but I have sixty

pages to dialogue

MY WIFE: Maybe you need a break.

I'll drive!

Or maybe you're waiting for the muses to come and inspire you appearance. Then how do you get yourself to sit down and get cracking on your latest opus? Here are a few helpful hints from your old pal.

- 1) Don't start at the beginning. Stuck for an opening, but you're pretty sure how the rest of the story will go? Then skip the opening and write the scenes you're sure of. Even write the ending first and work backwards, if that helps Even if you have to alter it later, at least you're getting some ideas down. I've skipped an issue in a run to write the next issue, then go on back to write the lead-in story. This might seem obvious to some of you, but it wasn't to me when I started.
- 2) Leave something for tomorrow. I got this tip from an old screenwriter. At the eng of the day, stop yourself from writing your last idea. Unless the assignment has to be done that day,

leave that last page or last scene for the next day. You already have it worked out in your head, so you already know what you'll write first thing the next morning. Hopefully that'll jumpstart you for the whole day. If not, then drink lots of coffee,

- And, oh yeah, you need to have a 22 page Captain Fabulous 3) The foolproof story. You get the call. The regular writer of The All-Goodguvs Squad has fallen off the wagon again, and blew his deadline bigtime. A penciler sits idle waiting for some darn thing. to draw. The managing editor is slow-roasting your editor s butt over a fire made from art submissions. This is your chance to prove you can get a story in their hot little hands within hours. But you've never written the "All-Goodguys" before. You've never even read the book! You have to fall back on a tried and true story formula that's always served you in the past. You have one, you know you do. And not a "day in the life story" either. Editors hate them! Artists despise them! And fans will know you're a gutless swine if you write one. So, find a sturdy tale you've told in the past, and iam the All-Goodguys into it. And don't whine about it. I've told you before in these pages how to hide your plotlines so no one will know you're using one you've used before.
 - 4) So, give up a foolproof story, Dixon! Okay, here's one I've used a ullion times and nobody's ever called me on it. This is real secret stuff so don't spread this around, okay? I call it "the collision course" story. You take three characters and set them in motion doing interesting but seemingly unrelated things. All the while they're being drawn closer and closer together for a dramatic climax that you can play for humor, irony, or horror. Oh, the idea stinks, huh? Well, it's the same formula Elmore Leonard uses most of the time - and maybe you think Pulp Fiction broke new ground story-wise?
- Let me tell you, the muses are as rare as a Steve Ditko convention 5) Find something in your story that amuses you. Your story's kind of flat after you've written three dozen proposals, an outline, and solicitation copy. You know it's still solid and workable and entertaining, but after telling it so many times you just don't feel like telling it again. That's when you come up with a private joke or hidden gag or silly piece of business to re-kindle your interest again. I amused myself coming up with names for movies on movie marguees in the background of stories. Once it was a marquee of movies that are famous for never having been made (War Eagle and I, Claudius), or movie titles that appeared in Seinfeld (Cry, Cry Again). That little giggle that was all my own was enough to get the juices flowing.

Anyhow, there are a few tricks of the trade I've used in the past to write when I didn't feel like writing I'm sure there's a few I've forgotten, but I really don't feel like writing any more.

The kids found a really big anthill in the backyard!

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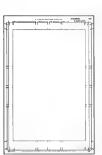
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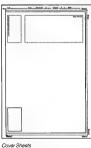


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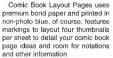
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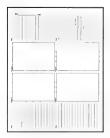
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. A.B.-3165-06/0 Tech Pen Size 6v0 (13mm)\$27.00 -AR-3165-04/0 Tech Pen Size 4x0

-AR-3165-03/0 Tech Pen Size 3x0 (25mm) \$22 00 - AR-3165-02/0 Tech Pen Size 2x0 (3mm)\$22 NO

- AR-3165-01/0 Tech Pen Size #0 (35mm)\$22.00

AR-3165-01 Tech Pen Size #1 (5mm)\$22 00 - AR-3165-02 Tech Pen Size #2

(6mm) \$22 00 -AR-3165-03 Tech Pen Size #3 (8mm)\$22 00 -AR-3165-04 Tech Pen Size #4

(1mm) \$22.00 -AR-3165-06 Tech Pen Size #6 (1.4mm)\$22.00 - AR-3165-07 Tech Pen Size #7

MECHANICAL PENCIL

Mechanical Pencil 2mm.

• 12-Pencil Leads- 2mm. HB

• 12-Pencil Leads- 2mm, 2H

AR-BP2375-HB \$10.50

AR-RP2375-2H \$10.50

+12-Pencil Leads-2mm 2B

- AR-SA02263-2B \$10.50

- AR-BP2376-NPB \$10.50

Mechanical Pencil Sharpener

- AR-BP14C Pencil Shapener

Sharple ...

(Mech. Pencil) \$10.75

SHARPIF MARKERS

Quick drying

Provides professional point for standard

• 12-Non-Photo Blue Leads-2mm.

- AR-BP10C \$6 95

Berol Mechanical Pencil is precision

made w/button lead release and light

(2mm)\$22 00

aluminum harret

MAGIC RUB

Ideal for pointing pencils leads, charcoa.

-AR-3435-1 Sandpaper Pointer \$.95

Magic-Rub Eraser

Sandnaper Pointer

and crayons by hand.

Fraser esnecially developed for sensitive surfaces, will not mark of smudge -AR-1954FC-1 Magic-Rub Eraser \$ 95



 Blending Stumps Soft paper felt with double pointed ends used for blending chargoal, pastels, etc.

Use sandpaper to repoint -AR-T811-1 ¼" x 5 ¼" -AR-T812-1 5/16" x 6" -AR-T813-1 13/32" x 6"

\$1.00 -AP-T814-1 15/30" v 6" ¢1 95 -AR-T817-1 5/8" x 6" \$1.50

· WORKABLE FIXATIF (Krylon)

YORKABU

FIXATIF



Workable Fixatif Permanent markers with high intensity ink AR-KR1306 \$8.95 - AR-SA37101 Ultra Fine Black \$1.30 - AR-SA35101 Extra Fine Black \$1.30



- AR-SA30101 Requier Black \$1 30

-AR-SA33101 Super Sharple \$1.95

-AR-SA46115 Gold Pen \$4.50 AR-SA46120 Silver PenS4 50

· CHINA MARKING PENCILS

Offers moisture resistant, non-toxic odorfree pigments. Self Sharpening, Offered as a dozen or s ngles. AR-173T Dozen Black AR-173T-1 Single Back \$ 95

AR-164T Dozen White \$10.75 AR-164T-1 Single White \$.95

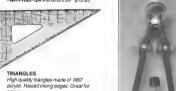


Palette Trav

7" by 5" plastic tray works excellent for holding inks

AR-CW161 SRP \$1 95

- T-SQUARES Plastic T-squares offering flexible plastic with both metric and standard
- measurements
- -AR-HX02 Plastic 12" \$3.95
- AR-NBA18 Plastic 18*\$7 95 - AP-NRA24 Pigetio 24"\$10 06
- Aluminum T-squares offering hard tempered aluminum blade riveted to a rugged plastic head
- AR-FR63-112 Aluminum 12" \$10.95 - AR-FR63-118 Aluminum 18" \$12.95 - AR-FR63-124 Aluminum 24" \$13.95



- 30" x 60"W/ Inking Edge - AR-1204-60 Triangle 30"x60" 4 inch
- AR-1206-60 Triangle 30"x60" 6 inch
- AR-1208-60 Triangle 30"x60" 8 mch \$5.50
- AR-1210-60 Triangle 30"x60" 10 inch
- AR-1212-60 Triangle 30" x60" 12 inch
- AR-1214-60 Triangle 30" x60" 14 inch

• 45" X 90"W/ Inking Edge - AR-1204-45 Triangle 45"x90" 4 inch

- AR-1206-45 Triangle 45"x90" 6 inch \$5.50
- -AR-1208-45 Triangle 45"x90" 8 inch \$7.50
- AR-1210-45 Triangle 45"x90" 10 inch \$9.50
- AR-1212-45 Triangle 45"x90" 12 inch \$1350

COMPASS SET

- Geometry set includes ruler compass, two triangles, protractor, eraser, and shamener
- 8-piece Geometry Set - AR-HX18807 \$4.95
- · 8-Piece Geometry Set (brass compass)
- -AR-723405 \$7.95
- Basic Geometry Set
- 4 piece Geometry Set (Buler 12) protractor, 30/60 + 45/90 triangles)





BULFAS

· Basic Combination Compass

lead pointer.

-AR-S61 Set\$15.95

Compass Set

and ead points

6-blace corposes set side-screwhow

har spare leads 2" durder point and a

6-p ece drawing set contains Small side

screw compass, 5 1/2" self-centering

knee joint compassydivider, extension

bar technical pen adapter, divider point

-ARHLX01330-01330 Set \$16.95

• 5" Bow Compass & Divider

point for use as a dividor -AR-494 5" Bow Compass \$ 4.95

• 14 Piece Drafting Kit

Draft no Kit includes 12' architectura

scale, 12x16 vinyl pouch, lettering guide

An all metal construction compass with

accurate 8" d ameter circles. Extra pivot

replaceable needle and lead. Makes

compass knee joint compass extension

- Stainless Steel Rulers offenna flexible steel with non-skid cork backing - AR-208-12 Steet Ruler 12 inch Cork
- Beaking \$5.95 - AR-200-18 Steel Ruler 18 Inch Cark Backmg\$695
- . Plastic Ruler 1 inch with 1/16" markings and metric markings. - AR-C36 Ruler 12" (plastic ruler) \$1.25



- CIRCLE TEMPLATES / FRENCH CURVES/ELLIPSE TEMPLATES · Circle Templates
- Metric and standard. Risers for smearfree drawing (Great for Inkers) e Large Circles
- AR-13001 \$7.95 Extra Large Circles



- · French Curves (Inking Edge) - AR-9000 Set S6.95
- · Ellipse Temps AR-PK12691 \$12 00



Circle Templates Set of 3

This set of 3 templates provides in netv-eight different circles and edge scales in 50th 16th and 10th as well as mm and centering lines. Sizes ranging from 1/32 inches to 31/2 inches.
- ITEM #AR-TD404 SRP \$17.95

· Ellipse Tempate



• POCKET PORTFOLIO - AR-FL419WH Pocket Portfolio 14 x 20

COMIC BOOK ORIGINAL ART SLEEVES Protect your original Art Nork

- Comic Book Original Art Sleeves 11 1/2" x 19" Polyethylene (3 0 mil.)
- AR-BAG 1119-25 25 Bags \$7 50 - AR-BAG 1119-100 100 Bag \$25 00



STORAGE BOXES Sketch Pac 2-sided safe storing box 12 3/8" v 4 % " v + 34" -AR-6880AB\$12.95



 One Tray Art Bins 1/3" x 7 %" x5 %" Elevated tray for viewing of supplies in bottom bin Tight Latch - AR-6843AC black\$15.25



- · DRAFTSMAN BRUSH Removes shavings from paper. Cleaning without fear of smudaing
- · Draftsman Brush (cleaning paper) - AR-FT5391 \$6 00







RUBBER CEMENT Contact achesive for paste-up and other oranhic art uses

Rubber Cement 4oz. -AR-BT138 \$3 50

- AR-OLKB \$6.50

- · Rubber Cement Quart
- AR-BT102 \$13.25 • Rubber Cement Thinner Pint
- AR-BT201 \$8 50 · Rubber Cement Pick-Up (eraser)
- -AR-BT700 \$1 50



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Wooden Mannequins Great for modeling proportions and poses at any angle Made from carved hardwood

- AR-CLY9037 6" Male

AR-CLY9036 6" Fema.e

AR-CLY9019 12" Female

AR-CLY9020 12" Male

AR-CLY9042 20" Male

12" Unisex Wooden Mannequin

wh man Adult fin you manneguin with perfect pronotions adjustable outs for posing Great for modeling proportions involving angles. Made from carved ardwood, 12" in height -AR-CW201 12" Model SRP\$19.95

SRF \$12.95

SRP \$12.95

SRP \$19.95

SRP \$19.95

SRP \$29.95



- 12" Horse Wooden Manikan
- AR033090410 • 12" Lizard Wooden Mannequin
- AB056090440







· Hand Mannequins

-AR-HM5 9" Child Hand

Life-like hardwood hand mannequins are fully articulated Comes in three sizes, male, female and child.

CDDC40 OF -AR-HM3 14" Male Hand -AR-HM4 12" Female Hand

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 LIGHTWEIGHT SKETCH BOARDS Made of strong, tempered masonite with cutout carry handle Metal clips and rubber band (included) hold

paper secure vin place -AR-SB1819 18 1/2" X 19 1/2

-AR-SB2326 23 1/2" X 26"

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· ALVIN ELECTRIC ERASER

Durable, high-quality UL visted unit. Uses of a full 7" eraser eliminates the annoyance of stopping constantly during heavy workload per ods to insert short erasers Unbreakable LEXAN casing fits the hand comfortably and can be hung by a convenient ring. The heavy duty AC motor elim nates the continual repair problems of typical lightweight erasers. Motor cooling vent locations are designed to allow one operation even under heavies: workloads. SRP \$85 00

-AR-EE1754 With slip-chuck



• ERASER REFILLS -AR-ER72 7° dark grey, ink, 1 doz -AR-ER73 7" white pencil, 1 doz. SRP \$6.95 -AR-ER74 /* pink pencii 1 doz. -AR-ER88 7" white viny , ink/pencil, 1 doz SRP \$6 95



• PRESENTATION CASES (PORTFOLIO) Spine mounted handle allows pages to hang properly to avoid wrinkling. Features 1" black superior quality rings. (Does not snag pages) Includes 10 archival pages (#7X)

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· DISPLAY PORTFOLIOS ARTFOLIOS 24 pages of acid, pvc, and legnen safe art sleeves Amount Cofe

- AR-IA1212 Artfolio Book 11 x 17 w/ 24 shts SRP \$15.95 (Holds Blue Line Comic Book Art Boards) - AR-IA 1214 Artfolio book 14 x 17 w/ 24 shts SRP \$25.95 (Holds most oversized art boards)

AR-IA 128 Artfolio book 8 1/2 x 11 w/ 24 shts SRP \$7.50

ELECTRIC ERASER and REFILLS

KOH-I-NOOR ELECTRIC ERASER

* ALL PURPOSE ELECTRIC SYSTEM Designed to erase both lead and mx from paper and film. Features a heavy-duty, maintenance free 115v motor protected by a high-impact. white LEXAN case Maximum effic ency with either the No. 287 white vinyl strip eraser for paper or the specially formulated no 285 imbibed yellow strip eraser for film. Includes a No. 287 strip eraser -AR-2800E All purpose E.ectric System



· CORDLESS/RECHAREABLE ERASER

Contains a trouble-free motor that delivers up to 4,500 rpm, fully charged. Vertsatile, two-way operation. cordless or AC Long lasting rechargeable battery, break resistant LEXAN case Lightweight, portable recharging stand power pack, plus a No 287 vinyl strip eraser.

-AR-2850C Cord ess. Rechargeable · KOH-I-NOOR ERASER REFILLS

-AR-ER285 Yellow, Imbrided, ink. 10/box

-AR-ER287 Soft Vinyl, pencil, 10/box

SRP \$6.95 **SRP** \$5 95

PRISMACOLOR PRISMACOLOR MARKERS AND SETS

• Prismacolor Singles

Unique four in one design creates four

line widths from one double-ended

marker. Extre broad nihe mitates

paint brush stroke while fine and thin

nibs achieve centle refined strokes

Sete

Prismacolor Art Pencil

Professional Art Pencil Sets Soft

lead, permanent pioments, biendable

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\$127.95

Water and smear resistant. No.

+12 Color Pencil Set

24 Color Pencil Set

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• 72 Color Pencil Set

+96 Color Pencil Set

+120 Color Pencil Set

\$205.00

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- All Colors are available! - All Singles \$3.30 · Metallic single nib PRISMACOL OR SETS Primary/Secondary 12-Set Includes AR-PM 50.19.15.57.6.4

32, 44, 53, 31, 61, and 9 -AR-BP12N \$40.00 · Cool Grey 12-set -AR-RP12P \$40 00 · Warm Grey 12-set -AR-RP120 S40 00 French Grev 12-set -AR-BP12R \$40.00 Prismacolor 24 set -AR-BP24S \$79,25 Prismacolor48 set -AR-BP48S \$158.50 • Prismacolor 72 set

-AR-BP72S \$238.00 Prismacolor 120 set -AR-BP120S \$394 00 Prismacolor144 set -AR-RP1445 \$470.00 • Empty Studio Marker Stack ARISTUDIO \$18 DO · Priemacolor 24 set w/hard carrying case -AR-BP24C \$90 00 · Prismacolor 48 set w/hard

carrying case -AR-BP48C \$170 00 · All Single Colors are avallable Available on I ne at www.bluelinepro.com.or

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You must purchase a minimum of 12 single marker each time you order.



Great for transfering drawings onto art boards

- AB-I B1218 12" x 18"

- AR-LB1620 16" x 20"

- AR-LB1824 18" x 24"



Brush Box

This 12" by 4" by 1 1/2" sturdy wooden box protects your variable brushes and pens AR-YK23000 SRP \$\$7 95

Dr. MARTIN WATERCOLORS

· Radiant Concentrated Watercolors Dr. Martin's Extremely concentrated watercolors Giving great brilliance and radiant tones nillustrations. They may be diluted with water and blend freely Radiant colors are less transparent than synchromatic colors In .5 oz dropper top botties SEP \$3,95 each

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-Radiant Concentrated Sets Dr.

Martin Each set is comprised of 14 colore to cover the entire range of radiant colors.

5 oz boti es · #ARDRA "A" set includes Alpine Rose, Black, Cherry Red, Grass Green, Jumper Green Lamon Vellow, Moss Bose Orange Persimmon Saddle Brown, Scarlet, True Blue, Turquoise Blue, Violet.

SRP \$55.20 per set · #ARDRB "B" set no udes. Amber Yellow, App e Green, Crimson, Cyclamen, Daffodil Yel ow Golden Brown, Mahogany Moss Green, Olive Green Sepia State Blue, Tangerine, Ultra Blue, Wild Rose

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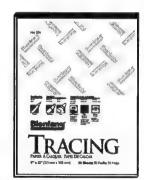


· Synchromatic Transparent Watercolors Dr. Martin Synchromatic colors are easy to handle and give ultimate transparency. They may be diluted with water 5 oz Dropperton hottles SBP \$3.05

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Synchromatic Transparent Art Set •#ARDRCS Thirty-s x 5 oz bottles. Includes Serie Back Burnt Sienna Cadmium, Cadmium Oranga, Carmine. Cense Chromium Yeilow, Cobalt Blue Dark Gray, Emerald, Hooker's Green, Lake, Lemon Yellow Light Brown, Light Gray, Magenta, Med um Gray Nile Green, Olive Green, Orange, Payne's Gray, Prussian Blue, Purple, Red Brown, Rose Carmine, Scarlet, Sepia. Turquoise Blue, Ultramanne, Van Dyke Brown, Vermilion, Violet, Vindian, Yellow Ochre. SBP \$113.50

Synchromatic Transparent Art Small



Tracing Paper

The 504 Tracing Paper has excellent transparency and tooth. It is used for rough sketches

a overlays. Fine surface is ideal to	r pencil, markers and inks	5.
R-HUN-243-123 (9"x12")	50 Sheets	\$4.98
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COPIC MARKERS. AIR MARKERS, TONES, REFILLS 1



COPIC Markers have been widely used in Europe and Asia where their coloring qualities go hand in hand with the style we know as manga. Their versatirity and variety lends itself to the imagination of the creator and gives him or her options for their oceative style. The standard square designed COPLC matters is couldie-ended and safety and group of COPLC matters are couldiered and safety and group of COPLC street been appeal to formulated with a loner designed not to dissolve matter style group. The creative style of the

· SINGLE BASIC MARKERS

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200 SERIES. One of the best parts about COP C markers standard and sketch is their refil able ink feature. No more tossino out dried out markers Just fill it back up again and you're ready to go. Fiefil's can be used up six times. This reflable feature gives you the opportunity to make your own color though mixing inks, creating an original color all your own

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-230 Various nx Empty Bottle



• Replacable Marker Nibs \$4.20

Another great feature about COPIC maxers s there interchangeable nibs. From broad to calligraphy - provide greater freedom of technique n vour rendennos COPIC Nibs de iver clear vibrant color on photocopied surfaces as well as glass plastics and metals. The nibs are made of strong but flexible polyester for smooth consistent application. Nibs come in a pack of 10 except for the brush variety that comes in a pack of

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- 310	Soft Broad	\$4.20	
- 320	Round	\$4.20	
330	Calligraphy 5mm	\$4.20	
- 340	Brush	\$4.20	
- 350	Standard Fine	\$4.20	
- 360	Super Fine	\$4.20	
- 370	Semi Broad	\$4.20	
380	Call graphy 3mm	\$4.20	
- 395	Skatch Nih Super Bruch	\$4.20	

Our special COPIC Tweezers give you an easy no-mess nib change that gets you drawing again in minutes. Being able to change nibs quickly nelos you keen up with the most demanding marker techniques.

400 Copic Tweezer \$4.20

SINGLE SKETCH MARKERS \$4,95 The oval designed Sketch COPIC market is double-ended and is fast drying. COPICs have been specially formulated with a toner designed not to dissolve making them able. to work directly onto photocopied surfaces and provide clear unplemished color COPIC Sketch markers' ova body profile gives you a real of a fast flowing expenence n your hands. It paints as well as it draws. They come with a broad nib and a brush like nih available n medium + broad and super brush making them great for delicate or bold expression (from fashion and graphics to textiles and fine arts lettering/cal igraphy) COPIC sketch markers are available in 286 colors. One of the best parts about COPIC markers is their refillable ink and replaceable

nih fasti rae · Single COPIC SKETCH Markers

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	ивнперго com or 1-282-0096	
-450	Coloriess Biender	\$4.20
-45100	Back	\$4.20
-45110	Special Black	\$4.20
452	Sketch 12 Basic Set	\$59.40
~454	Sketch 36 Basic Set	\$178.20
456	Sketch 72 set A	\$356.40
-458	Sketch 72 Set B	\$356.40
-460	Skatch 72 Set C	\$356.40
-462	Sketch 72 Set D	\$356.40
- 95	Empty sketch marker	\$3.60



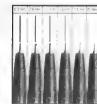
500 Copic Opaque White \$9.75 COPIC Opaque White is a water based white p gment used for high ight effects. It won't b eed into the base co or so it gives sharp fine definition and can be used on watercolor as well as other permanent ink surfaces



COPIC PAPERS -510 Copic Alcohol Marker Pad A4

\$9.95 -520 Copic Alcohol Marker Pad B4 \$19.95 530 Manga Manuscript Paper A4 \$6.95

-540 Manga Manuscript Pap	er B4 \$9.95
 MARKER STORAGE 	
-550 72 pc Wire Stand	\$59.9
-560 36 pc Block Stand	\$29.9



. COPIC's MULTI LINERS drawing pens allow drawing without annoying running ink. They are available in pens and brush. The pens come in a wide range of I ne widths (from 05 to 1 0 mm) while the brushes come n three different sizes small medium and

e	+ MUL	TILINERS SINGLES	
	-600	Multiliner 05	\$2.5
	-610	Multiliner 0 1	\$2.5
	- 620	Multifiner 0.3	\$2.5
	- 630	Multifiner 0.5	\$2.5
	- 640	Multimer 0.8	\$2.5
	-650	Multimer 1 0	\$2.5
	660	Mult liner Brush M	\$2.9
	-670	Muit Finer Brush S	\$2.9
	-671	Sep.a,ML 05	\$2.5
	-672	Sepia,ML 1	\$25
	- 673	Sepia,M_ 3	\$2.5
	-674	Grey,ML 05	\$2.5
	-675	Grey,ML 1	\$2.5
	676	Grey;ML 3	\$2.5
	• SET	S	
	- 680	Multiliner Set A	\$15
	- 690	Multiliner Set B	\$20



AIR MARKERS + 705 ABS-1 Kit

ABS-1 Kit. COPIC Markers can be used as an authrush by inserting the broad top end of the pen into our un quely designed adapter The Airbrush feature is wonderful for creating backgrounds and filling in larger areas of space. The Airbrush tool creates little or no mess and allows for nearly instant change n color It's simple to use - just attach one end of the COPIC Airbrush hose to a standard airbrush compressor and the other to the COPIC A rhrush adapter and you re ready to go. A compressed air can that attaches directly to the COP C Airbrush adapter is available for portability. This is the airbrush ABS 1 Kit 1 comes with 1 Air Grip (where the pen goes in) 2. The air adapter (where the empty canister that the air grip screws on to This canister's just a reservoir, it does

not contain air) 3. The airhose (this connects

\$60.95



an airbrush by inserting the broad top end of the pen into our uniquely designed adapter The Airbrush feature is wonderful for creating backgrounds and filling in larger areas of space. The Airbrush tool creates little or no mess and allows for nearly instant change in color. It's simple to use - just attach one end of the COPIC A rbrush hose to a standard airbrush compressor and theother to the COPIC Airbrush adapter and you're ready to go A compressed air can that attaches directly to the COP C Airbrush adapter is available for portability. This is the portable version of our airbrush system. The ABS-2 Kit comes with a D-60 can of compressed air and the Airgrip This item is great for the artist on the move ONLY the D-60 arcan can be attached directly to the air grip because of some special tubing inside the can. The other sizes of aircans 80

inen i	otne air adapter	ney not	more
are no	ol so portable		
720	Starting Set ABS	-3 \$2	8.50
730	Airgrip	\$1	7 10
740	Air Adapter	\$1	1.40
750	Airhose 1/4 to 1/4	3 \$2	1 50
755	Airhose 1/8 to 1/4	82	1 50
760	Air Can D-60	\$8	.95
763	Air Can 80	\$1	0.95
765	Air Can 180	\$1	2.95
770	Air Compressor	\$1	86.50

and 180 have to be attached to the hose and

910 NYK12 \$15.00 Starter kit to learn how to use color affects and techniques. Practice Sheets and a Color Guide are included



ZIP-TONES Too Professional Tone \$5.00 per sht. (See the website for over 20 different types and strips of toppe 1 Copics very own cut and stick Zip-Tone

Go to www bluelinepro.com to see additional Copic Art Supplies!



390 Sketch Nitt Med Broad \$420

DELETER Manga Kits - Markers - Papers - Inks - Whiteout - Art Tools

For the senous How To Draw fan, the Deleter I ne of products is here for you. The Deleterline includes color overlays, screens, it screens, gradations, inking accessories, and the highly prized Neop ko line of a conol based, double tipped markers. Give them a try today



DELETER MANGA KITS Deluxe Manga Starter Kit

This great kit for getting into the world of manga includes 3 G-pen t.ps, 2 Maru-pen tins, pen holder, black ink and white ink. painthrush, black Nec Piko marker, Comics-tones sampler set 10 sheets of manga paper, "How to Draw Manga" book, 15cm tall posable doll (wood), and 2 sheets of let

tering AR-DEL321-4033 \$54.95

 Mini Manga Starter Kit This great kit for getting into the world of manga includes 3 G-pen tips, 2 Maru-pen tips, pen holder, black ink and white ink, paintbrush, black Neo Piko marker, Com ice-tongs compared 10 cheats of manna paper, and "How to Draw Manga" book

· Comic Club Neopiko Kit

AR-DEL321-4032

This kit is a great introduct on to Neopiko markers and coloring manga. This kit inoludes 1 Neoniko 12 color marker set 5 sheets of manga paper (kent paper), 1 comic ink/white. 1 ink brush. 1 Neopiko Line 0.1mm tech pen, 1 color positioning pamph at and 3 neopiko practice sheet (w/ .ine drawings) AR-DEL321-4036 \$54.95

Comic Club Tone Kit

This kit organies all the assentia s to horan to use gray tones in mange illustrations. The kt includes 10 sheets of Manga Paper (A4 - 135 kg) 10 sheets of Junior Screens, 1 Comic Ink / Black. 1 Comic Ink / White 1 tone burnisher (Hera) 1 free pen holder, 2 Man, Pen nibs, 3 - G-Pen nibs, 1 instructional namehlet (Jananese), 3 sets of tone practice sheets (w/line drawings), and 1



You can use this for all Maru-pens, G-pens Aaji-pens (Tama-pen) AR-DEL3411003





G-pen is very elastic and drawing main lines \$2.05



or flach line

AR-DEL 3/11/00/

· Maru-Pen inking Nib (2pcs) Maru-pen is good for drawing details. AR-DEL-3411002 Sali-Pen Inking Nib (10pcs)

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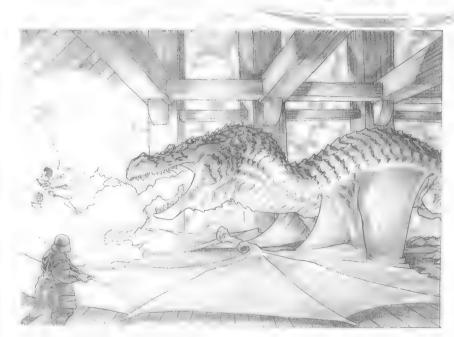
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Putting the Characters in Their Place



The setting or environment of an illustration gives the piece narrative credibility. It is what the characters are interacting in, or with. In a visual medium such as comic books, go ahead and draw the forest and trees, rather than have the characters waste narrative or dialogue speaking of unseen trees in a blank surrounding ...unless your characters are supposed to be hippie actors in a post modern play.

But remember: "drawing the setting" doesn't mean drawing every blade of grass - sometimes just drawing enough to give a *sense* of the setting is enough, and often the best path. Many times we artists become so involved in drawing the environment of the piece that the world being drawn for the characters is one that the characters themselves become lost in or overwhelmed by. Unless that is the intent of the story or idea, then go ahead and lose Waldo

Decide if your characters are to be acting in front of a backdrop or performing in theater in the round.

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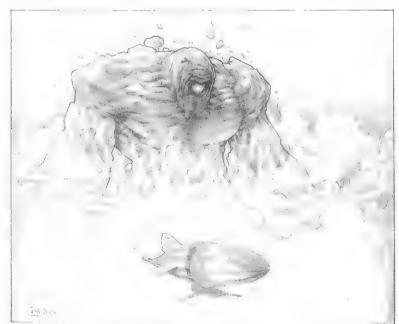
Sometimes the backdrop idea works best as it gives your characters more emphasis, a sort of spotlight. I guess that's where "background" comes from.



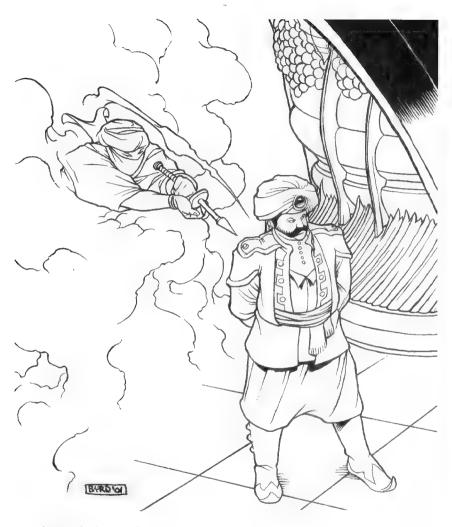
Or your background can be a threedimensional setting that your characters are moving through, like a stage set.



And that stage set can be so elaborate that the characters are mostly there just to give a sense of scale. The tiny people help the weave of the ropes appear gigantic.



Sometimes the setting is the character itself. Put some eyes and shoulders on a mountain, and it becomes the active force in the drawing.



I suppose there's always a fine line drawn between the character and background. Just keep a sharp eye on the situation.

Mitch

Next Issue. Creating Gadgets and Stuff!

TOM BIFRBAUM'S The Universe at Your Finger Tips **Thoughts on Scripting Comic Books** ART OR COMMERCE

There seems to be an eternal struggle in all creative media between art and commerce...the conflicting urges between doing what's good and what sells.

Of course, this is a largely artificial conflict - much of what sells well is also considered to be of high quality And widespread appeal as expressed by big sales figures is as much an objective measure of quality as anything else out there.

But as a writer, you often have to make decisions between what you think you can sell to the editor or reader and what you personally think is good. And how you approach this issue may have a lot to say about where you go in the business. So think about these issues:

1. What Do You Want Out of the **Business?**

My personal interest was primari.y to make a hving I never wanted comics to be just a hobby, nor did I have any alternate income to fall back on once I committed myself to the business. If you're in that position, it's pretty natural to lean heavily toward the commerce side of the art vs commerce debate, you've got to keep working to keep getting a paycheck, and if you're writing something that can't be sold, it's going to be pretty hard to keep bread on the table

On the other hand, if you're writing comics as a sideline, a bonus income to another job situation you're happy with; or if you've got a spouse, trust fund, or some with some of his later assignments). other source of support, or if you're so established in the business that you can afford to really challenge the audience and not worry about the consequences if you flop; it's a lot easier to feel like the art side of the equation is what matters.

I have the feeling many of the most ground-breaking and successful comics of the past couple of decades nave come from people in this position people who pushed the limits and did it with a passion.

because they didn't have to worry about where their future meals were coming from

2. The Readers Don't Want to Feel Pandered To.

If you're one of those people who does worry about where your future meals are coming from, you probably don't feel like you have the luxury of approaching comics purely as a means of self-expression. Your top priority is probably securing a steady stream of assignments, so the tendency is to try and do less what you think is great. and instead give the readers or editors what they think is great.

The danger is that today's comic book audience doesn't want to feel pandered to. or even catered to, necessarily. Whether it's what's actually happening or not, today's readers mostly want to believe you love what you're doing and are elevating the medium they love toward an artform.

In fact, it's probably what most fans of any creative medium want to believe Even as a somewhat jaded pro. I was surprised and a little disappointed to find out my hero Curt Swan didn't like penciling Legion of Super-Heroes stories back in the 1960s, and wasn't particularly proud of his work from those days How naive I was to think Curt was sitting there at the time thinking, "Man, what a cool story!" He was doing a job earning a living - and waiting for the day when he could do something a little more to his taste (which, thankfully, he got to do

But even though Curt wasn't as big a fan of his Legion artwork as I was, he did what he had to do. He put so much care and professionalism into the job that the resulting quality left me unable to imagine that he wasn't thrilled to be doing the story

And that' the kind of mental adjustment you sometimes have to make if you want to support yourself and/or a family, and the exact thing you love to do isn't getting the commercial response you need

So how do you make that adjustment?

3. Put Yourself and Your Sensibilities Into the Smaller Details.

If you're doing something that isn't exactly your cup of tea, find those little corners of the project where you can exercise your discretion and indulge vourself. Have fun in that little area and pour enough passion into it that it will sing a little bit, and boost your creative energies to get you through the other parts of the assignment that aren't so much your cup

An example for my wife and I might be our Dead Kid comic for Knight Press Mary and I really never had any interest in gross comics or horror comics or skateboards, or any of the rest of the elements that one might remember Dead Kid for. But it seemed like a very sellable idea to us and to our publisher, so we all decided to give it a

That left us writing the story of a rotting corpse as a super-hero, which isn't exactly what I grew up on, nor the kind of thing I cherish most as a comic-book fan and creator I go more for light, fun adventures, and heroes who are noble, likable guys more so than rotting corpses, anyway. But we kept those darker, edgier commercial elements in Dead Kid while making the hero a very nice guy, whose adventures were more fun and humorous than dark and

Maybe this isn't a great example, because the comic never sold worth a darn, but I think we did the job in terms of pulling together a strong creative product with a little luck and different market conditions, we could have hit a home run with it. In fact, it was the synthesis of those dark commercial elements and our preference for a lighter touch of fun adventure that gave Dead Kid a distinctive voice and a chance on the market of that time.

Another example is when we worked on



You don't have to love horror comics or gross comics to write a good comic about a zombie super-hero. We made DEAD KID into a pretty traditional super-hero who just happens to be a rotting corpse.

the Legion of Super-Heroes team during the era when Keith Giffen was plotting the book. His vision of the Legion was a lot darker and grimmer than ours but we were thrilled to be on the team, and extremely pleased to be given enough input into the series that some of our voice and sensibility came through in the final product Some great stories were told, and one of the things that made them great was the balance our brighter, more traditional touches brought to Keith's generally dark, gritty Legion universe. By giving an alternate feel to some of the corners of Keith's dark universe, we helped give it a little additional depth and variation.

Which leads to the next point...

4. Don't Be Afraid to Let Your Collaborators Do Something You Don't Personally Prefer.

industry history came in situations where multiple creators were tugging the project in different directions. Sometimes they did this amiably, with great respect for the other's varying voices, and sometimes the collaborators couldn't stand each other's guts But in all these cases, the reader got a more complex, more textured final product than would have resulted if one of those creators had prevailed on all issues over his

Baskin & Robbins sells 31 flavors for a reason. Not everybody has the same favorite flavor. In fact, few people want the same flavor all the time. So a series that features one and only one creative voice all the time is likely to start out boring anyone who prefers another flavor, and can end up boring even those people who prefer that particular flavor.

As an example, if we were running the Legion we'd have never blown up the Earth, but that's Keith's kind of story. And Some of the greatest collaborations in if he were insisting his voice prevail 100

percent of the time, there'd never have been a character like Devlin O'Rvan, whose real super-power was that he was such a nice guy that everyone wanted to cooperate with him, even the bad guys, But that's my kind of story And putting all these elements together made for a final product that had a lot to offer a lot of different kinds of

5. Stop Condemning Successful Projects You Don't Like As "Commercial."

A lot of top creative people out there seem to have nothing but disdain for creative product that isn't to their taste. Maybe this disdain is part of what makes them so good - a certainty in the "rightness' of the r creative vision Or maybe this disdain limits them to a relatively narrow audience that happens to share that particular taste.

In any event I don't regard a closed mind as a particularly creative mind, and attacking and dismissing entertainment that's not to your taste is, to me, the mark of a closed mind

And that leads us to the use of "commercial" as a derogatory term for something that's popular that we don't like. The trouble is, who among us uses that term even-handedly when something we do like hits it big? Such a breakthrough is, of course, never a commercial success: it's just the natural audience reaction to the unmistakable quality of the project

When something we don't like hits it big. it's an exploitive commercial project pandering to the d.m-witted public, and when something we do like hits it big, it's proof that the audience out there was just waiting for something "good" like this all

It's called selective perception. Evidence that supports our point of view counts, and evidence that contradicts our point of view is discarded. So commercial success for what we do like proves its high quality, and commercial success for what we don't like proves the mass audience is stupid.

But so what? Why not view the creative world this way? What we like is good and what we don't like is bad. Where's the harm in that?

6. You're a Writer, and Writers Can't Afford to Be Dumb.

Recognizing that everyone can and should have their own opinion and taste is just part of being a mature, intelligent adult. We aren't going to go far in contemporary adult society thinking only our religion is acceptable, or only our politics are acceptable, or only our culture is acceptable, or only our way of thinking is acceptable And if you can't stop fighting

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and despising something as relatively as I did from many more years of English trivial as someone else's comic book, how are you going to learn to live with other religions, politics, cultures, and approaches to life?

Someone who defines something he doesn't prefer as "bad" is going to tend to view the world in terms of black-andwhite and right-and-wrong, and that kind of thinking isn't generally the hallmark of great writing. There is, in fact, an audience for that kind of black-andwhite, right-and-wrong writing the people who already agree with you. And if that's the audience you want to spend the rest of your career reaching, well, then there's no reason to stop sneering at the comics you don't like.

I started this section saying writers can't afford to be dumb. I hope nobody takes offense to this; but in fact, pencilers, inkers, colorists and letterers really don't have to be geniuses, at least about matters beyond their craft. If a penciler can draw beautiful anatomy and perspective and is a whiz at storytelling he can think the sun rotates around the Earth or that Hillary Clinton shot JFK, and it isn't going to hurt his comics one bit.

But a writer doesn't have that luxury. A writer is essentially a professional thinker - your stories are your thoughts down on the page. And your stories will never be any smarter than you are So it isn't a great idea to shave off any I O. points by closing your mind to other perspectives and tastes.

7. Accepting What You Don't Like Doesn't Mean Losing Passion For What You Do Like.

You aren't going to do good work if there isn't inspiration and passion behind what you're doing, so don't convince yourself that you have to hate the comics you don't like to truly love the comics you do like.

You can keep feeling passion for your kind of comics, and add lots of other kinds of passions that have nothing to do with hating anything. Like a passion to defend everyone else's right to choose for themselves and like whatever they choose to like. And a passion to explore and appreciate the good in stories you previously condemned or overlooked. And a passion to understand how those

In a way, this last pursuit can help you

classes). When you look at some form of entertainment not as a devout fan or a bitter enemy, but as a dispassionate third party, you can come away with lots of insights into how it is all comics connect with their audiences.

So while many of your writing colleagues may be ridiculing some outof-favor form of entertainment, you can be in there exploring it, understanding it, and maybe discovering some fresh, creative pieces you can bring into your work that all those colleagues have no chance of finding.

I honestly believe a lot of the most successful creative minds out there are successful partly because they hate what they don't like with such a passion that it helps drive them to pursue their own vision with that much more determination. But I also think there are smarter and more constructive ways to generate creative passion within yourself.

8. One Generation's Moronic. Pandering Crap Is The Next Generation's Treasured. Golden Memory.

The perception that art and commerce are doomed to eternal conflict sometimes arises out of the kind of repugnance we all naturally feel for kid stuff shortly after we ourselves stop being a kid.

The comics I read growing up, the 1960s DCs, were absolute magic to me back then I can now objectively see that they're silly and unrealistic, but that didn't matter when I was seven and eight years old. The silly and unrealistic parts didn't bother me, and the fun adventure and colorful spectacle was exactly right for me at the time.

By the 1970s I'd grown up a little, and began to understand how silly some of those old comics were. By this time I couldn't stand the horrible, corny Super-Friends cartoon, and couldn't forgive Hanna-Barbera and ABC for foisting this childish, dim-witted exercise on the world. Clearly here was a case of creators and a network abandoning art for the sake of commerce, and I hated them for it.

But then about twenty-five years later, I discovered that, to people about ten years younger than I. Super-Friends was a treasured golden memory of what different kinds of artistic expressions helped get them hooked on super-heroes appeal to their very different audiences. and comics in the first place. And by then, of course, I'd also come to realize that learn about your own treasured comics the comics and animation that had so in the same way studying a foreign captured my imagination when I was a language can teach you about English (I young kid were just as commercial, and probably learned as much about English no more expressions of great art, than grammar during my hated Spanish classes were those hated Super-Friends cartoons.

My earlier perception that the creators and artists were at one time concerned about art and later concerned only about commerce was self-deception - an expression of that old desire to believe what I liked was quantifiably "good" and what the next generation liked was quantifiably "bad"

And of course, a business that keeps wondering why each new generation of its readers is smaller than the last need look no further than this kind of thinking toward invenile-appeal comics.

For several years I taught a summer course for young kids on making their own comic books. One day a kid about ten years old raised his hand and told the class about how he'd gotten on the Internet, and found chat rooms where he could talk with older fans about comics. I asked the kid what kind of feedback he was getting from the older fans, but knew with virtually one hundred percent certainty what the answer was going to be - that the older fans were saving the comics he liked were dumb. And, of course, that's exactly what he answered.

It's hard to imagine any other answer coming from contemporary comics fandom or the comics industry. But as writers. I think it's our job to break out of this narrow mindset, partly because we'll do better work if we open our mind to all sorts of different possibilities, and partly because we never know whose ox is going to get gored next.

Every time the industry narrows its definition of what can qualify as "art" and dismisses some disapproved success as merely "commercial," it makes it tougher for everyone to go wherever their creative instincts take them. Today they may be merely condemning Super-Friends, but tomorrow they may move on to exactly the kind of stories you love most Condemning other people's comics is kind of like salted nuts - once you start it can be pretty hard to

So you'll do better, and the business will do better, if you remember a couple simple rules don't let anyone else tell you that what you like isn't art, and don't tell anyone else that what they like isn't

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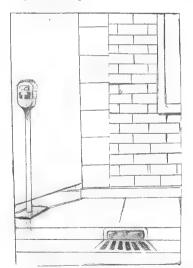


by Chris Dreier with Jacob Papiham pencils by Jack Gulmire

Look around, and you'll see that the world is not an empty void - your life may be, but that's a problem for your psychiatrist, not for me. I don't deal with dream analysis. Anyway, as I was saying, the background of your life is not an empty void, and the background in a comic book should be no different.

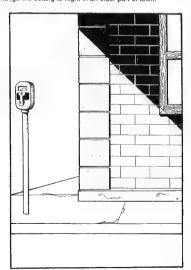
Many pencilers understand this, and illustrate plenty of backgrounds to ink Sometimes, however, you'll get a page that has simple backgrounds. And when I say simple, it's really just a nice way of saying uninspired.

As the inker, it's your job to be the artist's scapegoat. In other words, if you don't bring the backgrounds up to par with the rest of the page, vou'll be stuck with the blame. Here are a few tips to help you avoid the blight on your family name that weak backgrounds can bring.



The pencils (Ex. A) you see were done by a local artist named Jack Gulmire I asked him to keep it simple for the sake of this article. Notice that the perspective toward the bottom of the panel does not look quite right, and the bricks are not even with one another. Not to worry though; these things can be easily corrected when inking. I also did not specify the time of day depicted in this panel, so it is drawn neutral (like Switzerland). That, too, can be fixed through the quasi-magic of inking.

As you can see in the first inked version (Ex. B), I decided to change the setting to night in an older part of town.



Now before you go megalomaniacal and decide to drastically after the artist's drawings, understand that it will probably result in you being fired - unless, of course, you okay it with the editor first. For all you know, what looks like a neutral time of day could actually be noon on the newer side of town in terms of the story. It's not the inker's job to change every panel because he or she doesn't like it. We are supposed to correct mistakes, not interpret the story. However, in this case there is no story, and Jack is an unknown artist, so I can screw with his vision and he won't say a word! Bwa-ha-haha! Ahem. Sorry about that.

Anyway, I dropped a shadow into the panel and used a straight edge to keep all of the bricks even. Then, using a crow quill. Ladded a slight wood grain to the window frame to break up the white on the shadow-enshrouded frame and to introduce a different texture to the panel

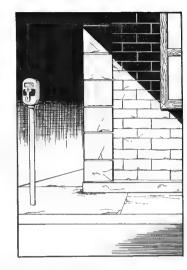
Speaking of textures, notice how a small amount of stipple work on the corner bricks can separate them from the rest of the wall. Be careful with stippling though, it can be time consuming, and get a little out of hand. This one time I went on a stippling bender and wound up stippling every piece of paper in the house. Toilet paper, novels, credit card bills. I stippled them all. I wanted to stop but I couldn't, so when a I the paper was gone, I stippled my wife. Please learn from my mistakes, and take it easy on the stippling.

To create the look of an old sidewalk. I used a crow guill to add cracks that ran along with the perspective. At this point I liked how it looked, but it needed something more. It still looked too new, and the large blank spot running down the left side was getting to me.

The first thing I wanted to deal with on the final version was the open space on the left. By filling it with black and creating a texture to soften it's transition to white, the panel becomes more balanced and the nighttime theme is expanded upon

The transition texture was

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straight edge. You could do it free hand, but the longer the line the harger it is to hold your hand steady. I also placed a shadow on the bottom right to anchor the panel and add to the snadow on the wall. The look of old bricks was achieved by running the crow quill along each set of lines. allowing the nib to go over the already ruled line. Even after all that I wasn't guite satisfied, so I added more cracks to the sidewalk and corner bricks.

I also moved a few things

created using a crow guill and around in the panel. For instance, I moved the curb up just a little to fix the perspective, I removed the drain entirely because it didn't seem to fit. and I added the cross member to the window frame because. well, windows have them These minor changes to the pencils are something editors expect from their inkers.

Overall I'm pleased with this panel, and I hope you are too. Maybe some of these tips will help you in your background inking.

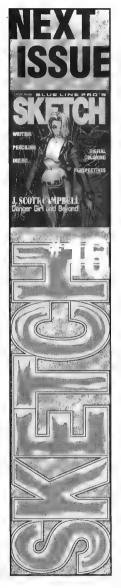
The Drier Inking Tool Box

Here's a list of the tools and material I used on this background piece - you'll want to give them a try on your own projects.

Crow Quill nibs: sizes 107 and 102 (sometimes) Brush: Windsor- Newton series 7, size 1 and 2 Straight edge: I use a triangle for longer lines, but mainly I use a simple ruler that I've raised by taping pennies to its bottom. (Be careful, the tape might smudge fresh ink and smear pencil lines.)

Ink: Rapidograph Ultradraw 3085-F Corrections Pro White

I also use gloves to reduce smudging and smearing



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Letters Forum

All letters received will be considered for publication. Letters published will be done so as received in regards to spelling, punctuation, etc. - however setters may be edited for length, language, and/or other considerations. All letters should be signed by the writer. as well as including the writer's legibly printed name address, and contact numbers (phone, fax, e-mail). Opmions expressed are those of their respective letter writers, and not necessarily shared byBlue Line While open as a critical forum, it is Blue Line's hope and intention that correspondence maintains constructive and positive elements of criticism. Simple name calling, rumor mongering, and/or mulicipusness is not of interest. Unless our

Please send your e mail missives to sketchletters@bluelinepro.com. With ail letters, please state clearly if you wish to have your address in print. We look forward to hearing

I recently purchased Comic Book Letter- I have a couple of questions ing Fonts Vol. 1 It does not seem to be 1. Why would you choose line art with effects and balloons are the only things black that are True Type format. I really like the look of the BLcomic type family. Can them with my Mac?

Thanks, Craig.

Craig.

Comic Book Lettering Fonts requires Macromedia Flash, Stuffit Expander & web browser installed to be Mac compatible. You can download Stuffit Expander by visiting www aladdinsys com. The Mac font families can be found by browsing CDdirectory to

\BLCBF\Fonts\MacFonts. The installation instructions are inside the BLCBF folder named 'fonts htm'. To use the fonts after they have been installed you will need a graphics program Most digital letterists use Adobe Illustrator, but there are other programs available such as CorelDraw or Macromedia Freehand. Learning your program of choice will require some form of study and a lot of time. A great way to get started using the fonts is by reading the lettering handbook that comes inside the CD case. Thank you for your support!

Dave Hvatt

Blue Line Pro Font Designer

Hı.

I am interested in the "BLP'S DIGITAL. COLORS FOR COMICS +CD-ROM' edi tion. Can you please give me some more information as to what is on the CD? Thank you.

Jennefer

Hi Jennefer.

Sure! There's lots of stuff, line art, flats. an expanded color palette, actions, flat work to render, full blown finished meces for you to check out, a channels tutorial in PDF format, and a few other nice tidbits. Over 500 megabytes of goodies!! Enjoy!

Aaron

completely Mac compatible. The sound anti-aliasing off? That makes everything and white, right? 2 Couldn't you choose 256 grayscale instead and then manipulate the contrast you give me any insight on how to use in PhotoShop to find the right thresh-

> 3. Also, if you choose the multiply option won't the layer underneath not be affected even if it is anti-aliased? If you are painting to the borders you shouldn't get a halo effect. You would only get a whitish haloes if you did a bucket fill, since the fill would stop at the first non-

Thanks!

Dancing-Bear

Dancing Bear

You choose "line art" to keep yourself from having to do more work than you should. Anti-aliasing will keep the line from being fuzzy.

2. Yes you could, but why manipulate the line when you don't have too? Scanning it as line art is much faster and more efficient. Scan an entire book of line art and you will see what I mean...Betcha I'll win in a race with time to do a page of flat color!

3. That's correct. This is a good way to work over pencils or even a scanned painting... That is, if you are working with layers. If you work in channels, it's a different story When you work with black and white line art it is best to scan in your work as a bitmap, convert it to grayscale, then to RGB or CMYK, Copy it into a new channel (an alpha channel) and work your magic that way.

Aaron

I'm 35 years old doing a life bit. Choices were made and I chose wrong, I accept the responsibility and have grown Rob from it. Over the years, I have tried different art mediums. I worked on embroidery for six years. Now I do scratch art. But I want to do more comic book style

art So I buy comics to read and draw for practice

I finally made it in the factory here They pay me \$150 to \$200 a month. You can imagine my surprise when I got into comics again after 13 years. In the 80's, I always wondered why the whole comic couldn't be like the cover. I cut back on my Debbie's and cook ups and have budgeted \$100 00 for comic book purchases.

Copying comic books has gotten old and the drawing bug has bit me again. I saw your magazine in my New England catalog and said "What the Hell". It took forever to get my Sketch #10 but I was not disappointed. I don't know what the old boys problem was but errors do happen I enjoyed it and now I am waiting for Sketch #13 I hope to subscribe yearly Still trying to work it into my budget.

I would like more drawing tips or longer articles. It takes me a week to fully read the entire magazine. I have reread some older issues Once I get my discount coupon, I will back order some of your older issues I would love to get the whole set. You now have a loval customer and fan. I have recommended your magazine o a few of my friends.

I look forward to future issues and tips. Give your crew my best. They excellence is its own reward. But praise is due when it's deserved. Keep up the good work my

Nestor J Gamez

Thanks for taking a chance with us We

As far as more illustrating articles, just look around the articles in this issue. I hope we were able to meet your expecta

Keep on letting us know your thoughts on how we are doing We are always looking for feedback.

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Dear Sketchers:

Another counte of issues have come and gone, and we are all better for it. Not to sound too much an ass kisser, but this is THE BEST magazine on the racks BAR NONE

Again, as a sidebar I would love to thank the Sketch creators for an outstanding job. Mitch's artwork is nothing short of amazing His depiction of what a sexy too). woman is....is exactly my depiction. I love the round and rotund look of his women. Keep up the good work!

Everyone else at Sketch is also doing an outstanding job, the only complaint I have is that the damn magazine is too short. There is nothing worse than completing your favorite magazine in one sitting. That includes all of the tutorials! To borrow from my son's karate class. 1 .2. You Rock!

As an open letter to other creators. Let's support group. I have offered to pay for the publishing of an independent comic book, that we as a group put together.

Offer me your storylines Offer me samples of your pencils Offer me samples of your inks. Offer me samples of your colors. Offer me samples of your editing Offer me samples of anything we can use to put together an Anthology that we as a group can put together. You want to be published? Let me know. I'm not here to screw you, believe me As a member of the CBLDF, and as a member of AIGA, I believe in Creator's Rights as much as anyone.

Don't send me Original Artwork, A ipeg will do Embed a watermark if nec essary. I just want to pick the best artists. writers, inkers, colorists, editors I can How do you think other Anthologies get started

As a professional business owner I am offering to GET YOU PUBLISHED. You retain the rights to your artwork My lawyers will see to that. I'm not trying to make money off of your blood, sweat and tears. I'm offering something you can show at the next con, the next portfolio review, etc.

It's your call Jerrett Lee Dornbusch Creative Director Dornbusch Design + Illustration Studios, dornbuschdesign.com

In response to Jen's letter on color ing in Photoshop 5.0 LE, "Letters Forum," SKETCH Magazine #14:

As a cartoonist very familiar with

work in channels on LE, so I stay with lavers. I create a color laver over the line work which I set on "multiply," then use my lasso tools and the paint bucket to drop in base colors. Otherwise, if I'm coloring right on the line art, the "darken" setting works well for my tools (and always be mindful of the tolerance settings

As you may be aware, LE is mostly

good for, A.) Learning Photoshop, and, B) Creating Web-ready artwork, LE contains some of the features for print-but the biggest drawback is that you can't color in CMYK, only RBG. I know the professional colorists are about to faint right now .. but until you can afford (or are ready for) an upgrade to the full ver sion of Photoshop. I can only suggest that you play around with it as much as possible. I'm a down-home, grassroots kind talk Let's get together Let' form our own of guy-I do all my work myself (jack of all trades, master of none), so the term "Limited Edition," only means I have to he smarter and more inventive. Some of us like to tackle pointless challenges like that. Plus (and I run the risk of getting smacked for saving this out loud), I used LE for all the gravscale artwork I've done Jess. for SKETCH! Don't get me wrong at all, here. I'm not trying to contradict Mr. Hubrich-everything he said was right on The thing is, not only is Mr. Hubrich an officer and a gentleman, but he's also a hard-core pro and coloring specialist. Of course he's going to tell you the best, quickest, most results-oriented way to get the job done. That's why they pay him the big bucks-and hats off to him too. But if you're like me, working from your own resources, you find ways to stretch what you have to work with. Professionalism and artistry are not only defined by the materials and equipment you use, but also your attitude and approach to challenges. Heck, even Jackson Pollock used house paint

Play with LE, have fun-and show them you CAN produce print quality work with it . Just keep savings those pounds, pennies, pesos and yen so you can upgrade to the full version of Photoshop.

Hope this helped KLAUS Visit "the klaus experience" at: http://www.klausandfigg.com

Thanks for the insight Klaus.

Photoshop LE, maybe I can offer a few I'm sure a lot of people who read this

tips on coloring. As you know, you can't magazine are, I'm not yet in the industry, as I've still got to finish my degree, however. I'm getting a chance to submit a story for a local, independent publication This book will be in black and white Being a poor college student, I haven't got the cash to shell out for expensive tones, unless they are absolutely a necessary purchase.

My question is this: do alternative shading methods show up in print well enough to still look clear and professional? I'm proficient in both graphite and ink wash shading, and I actually work better in these mediums than I probably would apply tones. I know copy machines have come a long way since the days of the humble ditto machine, but I am not quite sure how well they work with graphite these days. The kind of printing press the book will be printed with (I believe) is the same one used for the regional newspaper, so I am assuming that it is of decent quality. Anyway, if you could offer any help on the subject. I would be most grateful! Thank you for your time. Jess Stoncius

Bob

You'll want the publisher to scan your artwork into a computer. Photoshop is the main program that is used to scan The cool thing about Photoshop is that you can scan grey scale artwork and when the image is reproduced, it will look very close to your original. In Photoshop you can alter the light and shadow source to match your artwork. The publisher will need to output the negatives at no less then 300 dpi. The printer will use these negatives to burn their printing plates.

Some newspaper printers have great equipment, but some might have ancient equipment. You'll want to give them proof copies of your work (NOT THE ORIGI-NAL) to match the pages being printed. This gives the pressmen doing your printing something to reference and judge the auality of artwork

Many times it's possible for you to be there when they run the book. This is called a press check, and hopefully this allows you to catch any last-minute problems and put out any fires on your project. I've gone to many press checks and most of the time the 10b turns out great

I hope this helps if you have any other questions please drop me a line. Take care.

I'm an aspiring comic book artist, like



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Pat Quinn's Perspective

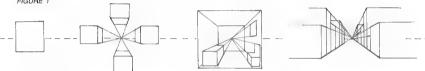
Applying Perspective to Your Storytelling

The intention of this article is to not only give you a little bit of "how to", but also a little of "why and when to." For most beginners, earning the mechanics of perspective is one step on the road to becoming a professional artist. In comics, artists have to consider visual storytelling along with technical drawing issues. So how do you make perspective work in your comic

Before we get too far, let s do a quick perspective review.

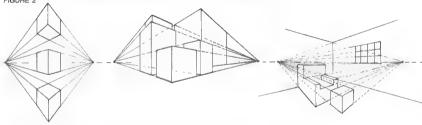
In the following examples we have some simplified perspective drawings. In each, the broken black line represents the "horizon line" or "eye level line." The object being drawn is in solid black lines, and the "construction lines" appear in grey. One-Point Perspective

In a nutshell, all lines recede to a single point. Here are some basic examples:

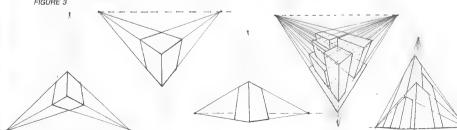


Two-Point Perspective

You guessed it; in two-point perspective lines recede toward two separate vanishing points.



With three-point perspective we have a third vanishing point that is either above or below the horizon line. FIGURE 3



Now that was a quick review.

So we know some perspective, great. How do we use it to make our comics better? Let's start simply. Here are four different cube-heads. Each one is drawn differently and demonstrates different applications of perspective for storytelling purposes.

Figure Four is a straight on "head-shot" - clear, direct. and to the point.

A slight nead turn in Figure Five shows more of the cube-head, and is still very clear and easily understandable. However, this one is slightly more interesting, and provides a better illusion of the cube as a threedimensional object.









Figure Seven is also drawn

in three-point perspective, but

by looking down at it, we

diminish the object's power.

FIGURE 7

FIGURE 4

Those were simple applications, but let's try something a little more applicable to comics.

Say you need to show that an angry character has entered a room. How can perspective help make that panel really work? Let's start at the beginning, with one-point perspective.

In Figure Eight we have an angry character in an entrance, which opens from a hallway. Our horizon line is low, and all lines recede to a single vanishing point. This panel is clear and communicates the idea well enough.

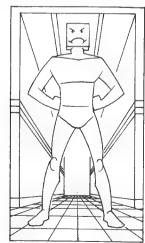


FIGURE 8

When we switch to two-point perspective the drawing becomes a little more dynamic, without loosing clarity...which is what we want. The horizon line is still low, with lines receding to vanishing points that are way off the left and right.

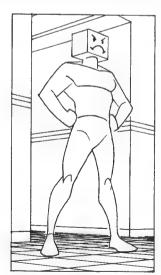


FIGURE 9

In three-point perspective our shot is still very clear, but the image is much more dramatic. Again, the horizon line is low. It has a single vanishing point to either side, and now includes a vanishing point over head.



FIGURE 10



FIGURE 12

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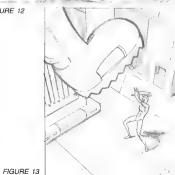


FIGURE 14

Now we have these three similar shots to choose from. Let's get a little more specific with the panel description and see which shot works best for the scenario...and remember, some of this will reflect personal taste, but the overall object is, "How does this shot serve the story best?"

What if we take "angry character in an entrance" and expand it to "angry Uncle Cube-Head in an entrance won't let Little Cube-Head go outside to play." Which do you think works best? Sure, they could all work, but which shot could tell the story best?

I'm leaning towards Figure Eight. Even though it's not the most dynamic of shots we can see past "angry Uncle Cube-Head" to the outside, from which he is restricting Little Cube-Head of achieving his goal of going outside to play.

Let's change the description again..."angry Villainous Cube-Head Ph.D. stands triumphant." Here again, all of these shots will work, but which one will really sell that point of the story? In this instance I would go with Figure Ten, since it is the most dynamic and dramatic of the three.

The point here is to "choose your shot," making sure that you tell the story clearly and can still make specific moments really stand out when it's necessary - which also raises the point of not making every shot some crazy angle just because you know perspective so well. Be selective; do what is in the best interest of the story.

Below are a few random shots featuring different applications of perspective in different scenarios. See if you can tell which type of perspective is being used, and where the vanishing point, or points, are placed.



FIGURE 11



When you are ready to try some application of perspective to your storytelling, watch out for some of these pitfalls:

We've already mentioned trying to make every single shot extra dynamic. Don't do it, you'll weaken those moments that are supposed to be truly dynamic. Be selective.

Please, for the safety of the entire universe, when you are starting out do **not** do the "directly overhead shot." Nine times out of ten this shot just flattens the space, and the image becomes hard to decibher.

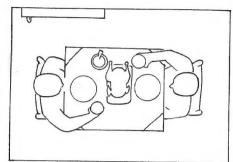
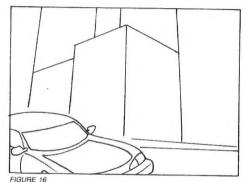


FIGURE 15



Make sure all of your objects respond to the same horizon line. In Figure Sixteen, the car appears to be sinking into the street. This is a result of bad perspective, and bad planning.

"But what if it was sinking in the street?" you ask? Well, then that action should be clear. Remember you have to tell a story, not just draw pictures.

Be careful how you frame/crop images and where you put your vanishing points. This one is kind of a combination of errors. Look at Figure Seventeen...the (shoebox) buildings appear to be in perspective - at least all the lines are receding, right? So why does it still look weird? In an attempt to make a dynamic shot by tilting the camera, the artist neglected to tilt the horizon line with the camera. If the intent was not to tilt the camera, then vertical vanishing point is too far to the right. While the vanishing point need not be centered over the entire image, it would help if it were over the object (that is in the case of buildings, etc.):

stairs and sloped items are a different matter).

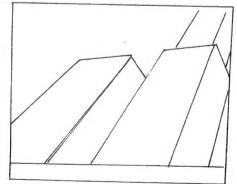
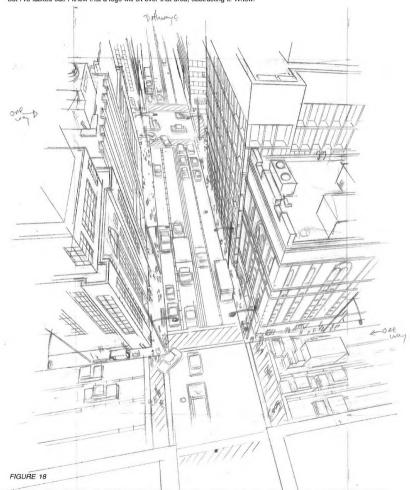


FIGURE 17

Take a look at our last image, Figure Eighteen. I had to draw a cityscape for a job and it just so happened to coincide with this article, so I thought I'd throw it in here. For this drawing I decided to do a scaled down "rough" of the city, which I would later blow up to a usable size for the assignment. This one is about 5.5 in x 4.25 in. I usually do a loose free hand drawing of the scene with non-photo blue pencil first, and fit my horizon line and vanishing points to that rough...sort of a "corrective" method. I used three-point perspective for this shot, and you'll notice how the perspective warps a bit at the top. Normally this might put me in a panic, but I've lucked out: I know that a loos will sit over that area, obstructing it. When!



Of course all this is just the tip of the iceberg, but hopefully this will get you thinking about how you use perspective in your storytelling. Try different things and see what happens, experiment a little...just make sure that editors only see the successful experiments!

Go have fun, thanks for your time; I hope it was worthwhile for you!

Stephen Steinbach's Animation 101

The Head Turn Assignment

The Head Turn Assignment is a great lesson for learning traditional animation. Animating a head turn is a great assignment for students for several reasons:

- 1) To learn the basics of "pose to pose animation" (keys, breakdowns, and in-betweens)
- 2) To learn the basics of "arcs" in animation
- 3) To learn the basics of "slow-in and slow-out"

Before we can begin the assignment, we must first learn a few basics, such as definitions for some of the terms used above.

Pose to Pose Animation

Pose to pose animation is a way to animate that is used by most animators. Basically, it means to draw the first drawing in a sequence first, followed by the last (these are called "key" drawings). After the first and last keys are complete, the animator will draw the middle drawing (this drawing is called the "breakdown" drawing). After the middle drawing is complete, the animator will draw the second middle drawing is complete, the animator will draw the second middle drawing between the first and the breakdown drawing. The animator will continue this process until all of the drawings are complete. These are called the In-between drawings.



Example #1: if you have 16 drawings in a sequence, the animator will do drawing #1 first, followed by drawing #16. After #1 and #16 key drawings are complete, the animator will draw #8(the breakdown), followed by #4, followed by #2 (the in-

By animating this way you are always drawing in-between drawings, which helps keep your drawings "on model" and in proportion. In the head turn assignment, we will draw the first and last key drawings of the sequence first.

Arce

All movements in animation should follow arcs. If your arcs are wrong, many times your animation will not look smooth. In the head turn assignment, the arcs should be considered after the first and last key drawings are complete. It is also recommended that you draw your arcs out on paper; you can draw you arc on the breakdown drawing.

Slow-in and Slow-out

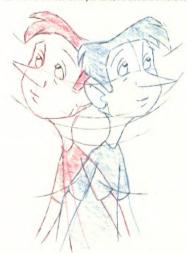
This is another term used by animators; it means to slow into a key drawing or out of one.

Example #2: a car is driving down the road at 16 mph and approaches a stop sign. The driver slows to 8 mph, follow by 4 mph, followed by 2 mph, followed by 1 mph until he comes to a complete stop. Sound familiar to example #1? This is an example of slow-in. The animator kept drawing the in-betweens 'til the movement came to a complete stop.

Slow-out is the opposite of slow-in. In this case the car is sitting at the stop sign and begins to move. From 1 mph to 2,to 4,to 8,to 16,to 32,to 64 mph etc., the car is "slowed out" of a pose. With the head turn you will want to have the head slow-out of the first key drawing, and slow-in to the last one.

Generally, when someone turns their head they lead with their eyes. In other words, they move their eyes first before they move their head. As well, people usually blink their eyes when they turn their head. Fig. 2 is an example of a basic eye blink with a head turn.

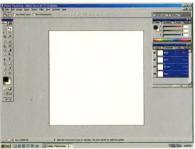
The amount of drawings for a head turn depends on the timing and acting of the movement. A person who is startled may turn around very quickly and be surprised, as opposed to someone who is scared and is looking behind them slowly in fear. The number of drawings in a head turn has to do with the acting; however, the basic principles of a head turn are universal. The more in-betweens you have, the slower the movement.



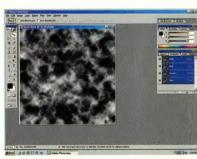
DIGITAL COLORS

How to Make a Quick Brick in Under Five Minutes!

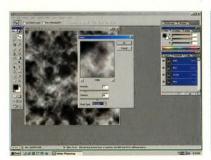
One of the coolest things about working with channels is making nice effects. These effects are made using channels and the filter effects that come with Photoshop. When you use them in combination with each other, you can get a rather convincing effect very quickly. For example: we can make a nice brick in under five minutes by following these steps...



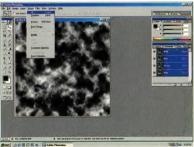
Step (1): Open a new file in Photoshop and set it up five inches by five inches, at 300 dpi in RGB color. Make sure you have 100% black as your foreground color. Make sure your background color is white. Fill the area with your black color (Edit-Fill)



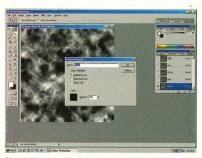
Step (2): Go to Filter>Render>Difference Clouds. Repeat this three or more times to get your desired pattern for your brick.



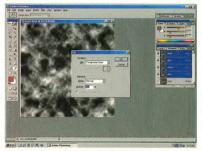
Step (3): Personally, I like to give my brick pattern a bit more "kick" by going to Filter>Texture>Grain.



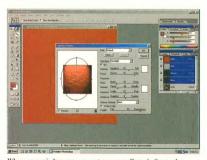
By doing this, the brick becomes a bit more "brick like" by becoming rougher.



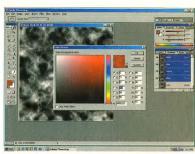
Step (4): Now you will want to make a new channel. This "alpha channel" can be called anything you want, but you may want to give it a logical name like "brick". Make sure your settings are like the picture shown. After naming your channel, your area should go black



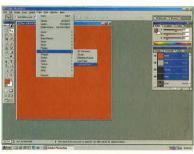
Be sure to select your foreground color to change to the color you want.



When your window pops up, set up your effect similar to the picture shown. The power of this filter is the Texture Channel at the bottom of the window. Select the "brick" channel to get this effect. several different bricks just to keep them random. Play with the settings until you like your brick texture.



That's okay...click back onto your RGB channel, and fill your foreground with a desired color of brick. Yes, green brick is okay if you really want to ...



Step (5): Now onto the cool stuff! Go to Filter>Render>Lighting



After I get the texture I want, I crop the brick into a logical shape so I can use it later in a piece of work. You may want to create

It doesn't end with quick bricks though. The same logic applies when creating any quick texture in Photoshop. Just remember to create a black and white texture, copy it into a channel, and then work with it in the Lighting Effects filter by using the Texture Channel option. Yes...it's that easy!

BLUE LINE PRO'S

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Comic books are a fun medium! Blue Line Productions' goals are aimed toward enhancing this art form - and others - through knowledge and quality art supplies. We try hard to make certain that you, the reader, have the comic book technique information you require for your personal enjoyment of this great field.

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Rob Hickey

Along with his duties with Sketch Magazine, he has been the creative force behind Blood & Boses. StormQuest and Tempered Steele. He currently has a new Blood and Roses series in the works along with his new creator owned series Race Danger which both should be

appearing at BLP Comics. Bob is one of the co-founders of Blue Line Productions. www.bluelineoro.com

He can be reached at bobh@blue(inepro.com

Flint Henry WizKids/Mage Knight, Ral Partha, and other companies utilize the fantastical concepts pulsating from his Nyarlathopean pencil point - icing on the appendage after more than a

decade of delineating disturbed, dark, and violent characters such as Grimiack, Lawdog, Manbat, and the occasional demonic Batman.



Chuck Divon

After a seemingly endless Bat-oeuvre including Detective, Robin, and semi-

Gotham, taking his particularly prolific and professional wave several larger publishers. A few years ago he became of storytelling to join the warm and sunny waters of interested in digital coloring, and is now contributing his CrossGen.



M²a.k.a. Mike Maydak

M2 has been taken under-wing as the patawan in training at the Blue Line Pro ranch. He is learning much from

the experienced crew at Sketch about the comic industry and has mastered the technique of "getting lunch". He often contributes in the form of graphic design, writing, and editorial work



Bill Baker

Bill Baker has established himself as one of the preeminent interviewers in the comics journalism community. After getting his start as a reporter on a now-

defunct website, he graduated to doing both long and short form interviews for two of the best known comic book sites on the web, Comic Book Resources and Wizard World. This lead to his articles and interviews appearing in print magazines, including Comic Book Marketplace and Comic Buyers' Guide, as well as Fantastic Visions: The Art of Matt Busch, by Avatar Press in 2001.



Mitch Byrd

Mitch's pencils have wowed everyone, from the sci-fi super-hero Guy Gardner crowd to the extreme-evisceration indulgers of Verotik comics. Enjoy his

attractive, lighthearted art with our Sketch exclusives.



Room Smith

Beau created and writes Parts Unknown and Primate currently at Image Comics, writer of The Undertaker for Chaos Comics. The Tenth.

Wynonna Earp, Spawn; Book Of Souls, Wolverine/Shi, Batman/Wildcat and the upcoming cross over-Xena/Wonder Woman and several Star Wars stories for Dark Horse.

See more at www.flyingfistranch.com

Tom Bierbaum

Torn, with wife Mary, has scripted such comics as Legion of Super-Heroes and The Heckler for DC Comics, Xena and

Return to Jurassic Park for Topps Comics, Star for Image Comics and Dead Kid Adventures, a creator owned project by Knight Press.



Aaron Hübrich

Aaron was going to be the next great fantasy painter, but something caught his eve in college - comics! From then on he never looked back, focusing on

nal work on Nightwing and Birds of Prey making an impact on the the comic book industry. In the - Chuck Dixon leaves the darkness of 90's he learned a lot by self publishing, and working for skills to major nublishers.

> Aaron has authored a book showing the "step by step" process on how to make comic books come to life using Photoshop. If you were ever interested in how to color for comics, then you really need to check out this book!

Pat Quinn

Pat has drawn comics for several publishers. His work includes Gen 13. Writer's Bloc Annual, Necrotic, and Image Introduces...Cryptopia. Pat has also illustrated several projects for Idea

and Design Works, including Bionicle trading cards and the comic adaptation of Origin's Ultima video game, as well as a Green Lantern story for DC Com-



Chris Dreier

Chris started his inking career in late 1993 with Riot Gear, from Triumphant

comics. He's since worked with Now Comics. Antarctic Press. Caliber Comics and Dreamsmith Studios, Currently he's working on Angel from Dark Horse Comics. In his spare time he works on his own comic book projects. Contact Chris at dryinks@msn.com.

What Are You Doing?

Whether you are a professional actively engaged in the field, passed through the industry doors on some level at a time in the past, or are looking to get involved with the comic book business in the future, please drop us a line — in this medium we all love, we want to hear from everybody. The Sketch letters forum is always open, and open to all! Let us know what you think about Sketch, topics and creators you'd like to see covered, or new features you'd like to see. Voice your opinions about the industry, share your industry-related experiences with others, or share your tips with the Sketch audience.





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